

Where Do We Go From Here:
ASSESSING THE HEALTH OF A CHURCH STARTED IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

By

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A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

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ABSTRACT TO THE PROJECT

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE:

ASSESSING THE HEALTH OF A CHURCH STARTED IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

By STEPHEN M. WEBB

After starting New Life Christian Church (NLCC) seventeen years ago, I was concerned that the church might be losing some of its initial purpose and mission. This project assessed and evaluated the vision and mission of NLCC and implemented a corrective action plan based on the initial assessment and evaluation. A decision was made in consultation with the leadership team of NLCC to assess the various ministries of the church. Based on discussions with the leadership team, an assessment tool called the “Church Health Inventory” (CHI) was used with permission from the Missouri Baptist Church Convention. The CHI is a 40 question survey that asks participants a myriad of questions on church ministry. The survey was distributed to church members to complete anonymously and voluntarily. The survey took participants approximately 15 minutes to complete. In preparation to distribute the survey to the membership, two workshops were conducted with church leaders to determine the needs of the church as identified by the leadership team. After the needs were indicated, I researched evaluative tools that could be used to assess key concerns. Upon completion of the survey, a workshop was conducted to implement a corrective action plan to address the challenged areas identified by the survey. The findings from the CHI indicated that the following three areas required attention: Stewardship, Sunday School and Worship. Based, on the data collected a corrective action plan was agreed upon by church leadership and a final workshop was conducted to monitor the implementation of the corrective action plan. Assigning new people to ministries, purchasing curricula, and ministry development workshops are parts of the correction action plan. This project does not have all the answers, but it has a systematic approach to looking at church health and growth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank God Almighty for the vision, strength and perseverance to fulfill this assignment.

It is a humbling experience to have this assignment in this ministry of Pastoral Care.

To my wife Sandra who supports all of my efforts, and through her support allows me to fulfill my professional, Clerical and educational responsibilities.

To my Mother, Mrs. Alice Webb, whose strength and wisdom has empowered my siblings and I to believe that we could achieve all of our goals and aspirations. To my father, Leslie Leon McDonald Webb with his quite strength has given us a work ethic and an example of a loving father. To my five children, whom I am well pleased, Jackie, Anthony, Tiffany, Daniel and Stephanie Webb.

To my Site Team and Dr. Jermaine Monk, whose help and encouragement kept me focused and helped me complete the project.

Thank you,

Stephen Monir Webb, D.Min

DEDICATION

To all those Church Planters that have sought to carry out the great commission in an ever-changing world.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

In December of 1999, after serving in a ministry for fifteen years the Lord lay upon the heart of Rev. Stephen Webb to organize a church that would be open and affirming, progressive, and community oriented. It would be a church fulfilling the call for spiritual growth, social change and inclusivity for all believers.

At this time Rev. Stephen Webb was serving as associate minister of the Park Ave. Christian Church (DOC) under the leadership of the late Rev. Raiford S. Wheeler, Senior Pastor. Rev. Webb planned a worship service for January 1, 2000, which would be the first service of the new congregation that would become the New Life Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (NLCC). Mrs. Alice Webb graciously extended the invitation for the service to be held in the lower level of her home, which was located at 96 Warren Road in West Orange, NJ. At that very first service, there were thirty-five people in attendance.

A core group of faithful members began meeting in January of 2000 and became the organizing committee. The first organization meeting gave those in attendance a chance to share their prior church experiences, if any, their view of what they wanted in a church and faith community. The organizing committee began, with prayer to create vision and mission statements that gave the worshippers and the church direction. The organizing committee used the forming–storming–norming–performing model of group development that was first proposed by Bruce Tuckman (1965), who said that these phases are all necessary and inevitable in order for the team to grow, face up to challenges, tackle problems, find solutions, plan work, and deliver results.¹ This method was found to be productive and therapeutic for the organizing

¹ B W Tuckman (1965), 'Developmental Sequence in Small Groups', *Psychological Bulletin* 63.

committee, in that it gave people an opportunity to share their prior church experience and heal any old wounds.

Out of these early organizing meetings came a collective group conscience, which was guided by the Holy Spirit. The newly forming church decided to call itself New Life Christian Church (NLCC), the members unanimously agreed that this was the perfect name for the newly formed faith community. These members were gaining ‘new spiritual life’ that produced momentum and energy to this new movement.

The newly formed faith community followed in the tradition of the early ‘New Testament House Church’², where they would meet in the homes of the core members for their organizing meetings. According to Charles E. Hummel in his article entitled “The church at home: the house church movement”, the modern house church movement has both captured allegiance and anxiety. Many acclaim it as a rediscovery of New Testament Christianity, while others see in it an escape from the realities of established church life.³

The early Christian community started as a house church. The record in the book of Acts tells us that “They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship... They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.”⁴

Some twenty-five years later, the apostle Paul wrote to friends in Rome: “Greet also the church that meets in their house.”⁵ During the following decades Christians continued to meet in homes. In times of persecution they went underground into the catacombs. But after the Roman

² Charles Hummel “The church at home: the house church movement” Christian History. Volume 9. Retrieved from: www.christianitytoday.com/history/.../church-at-home-house-church-movement.html

³ IBIB

⁴ (Acts 2:42)NRSV

⁵ (Rom 6:5) NRSV

Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity in AD 313, church buildings began to multiply. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Reformation fostered new churches as Protestants built their own places of worship. Yet in every century Christians have met in homes in small groups to supplement their more formal church life.⁶

There are some churches that have left the established denominations to form independent house churches. It is this latter development, evident since the mid-twentieth century, which can be called “the house church movement.”⁷

NLCC was established as a House Church, this model served the needs of the congregation. Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Webb opened their home as the initial place of worship for NLCC. Notable preachers such as Rev. Dr. C. Vernon Mason, Rev. Dr. Suzan Johnson Cook, and Rev. Dr. Granville Seward were invited and preached at NLCC while they were a House church. The church worshipped with excellence in the home of the Webb’s for two years, and in the summer of 2002, the church worshipped in the back yard of now Pastor Stephen and Mrs. Sandra Webb’s home. The Lord held back the rain every week that hot summer.

The newly established congregation chose to become part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). During this time there was an initiative in the Christian Church (DOC) to start 1000 new churches, this initiative was called ‘2020 Vision’.⁸ NLCC approached the North East Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) requesting permission to become a church in formation. At the Regional Assembly, in May of 2000, NLCC was voted in as a church in formation.

⁶ Ibid 2

⁷ Ibid 2

⁸ Richard Hamm, *2020 Vision for the Christian Church(DOC)* , Atlanta, Ga. Chalice Press

There were many things to consider in the formation of a church. Not only were there spiritual concerns, there were also logistics and organizational structures to be considered. Some of the first items on the agenda were to become incorporated, register the name of the church with state, and applying for tax-exempt status. The church had many discussions concerning what it would mean to have tax-exempt status, and having to adhere to the federal regulations that accompany that status, the church decided to move forward in the direction of becoming a 501c(3) tax-exempt organization.

Vision and Mission

It was important that the organizing committee create a shared vision that was inspired by God and penned by the congregation. From the original Vision and Mission statements created in the forming years, not much of the verbiage has changed in 17 years. When creating the vision and mission of NLCC looked at strength and performance. The strengths were what church did well and the performance was what they had accomplished. The church understood they could not do everything, but what they could do, they were determined to do well. Their motto became “Do better what you already do well.” The belief that every institution can do everything is just not true. The church then looked outside for opportunities to serve, and the needs of the community. What could the church do, with the limited resources they had, to make a significant difference, and set a new standard? Peter Drucker, author of *Managing the Non-Profit Organization, Principles and a Practices*, states “One sets the standard by doing something and doing it well. You create a new dimension of performance.”⁹

⁹ Peter Drucker, *Managing the Non-Profit Organization, Principles and a Practices*, NY, NY: Harper, 1992

The vision statement would be the guiding values and core beliefs that would give direction to the church. Furthermore the vision would be the overarching principles and standards that would direct the course of the church. The mission statement would be the process by which these goals are attained. The vision is the goal; the mission is the process. When creating the vision statement the church looked at what their core beliefs were, and what it was they wanted to accomplish through this ministry. Therefore the mission would need to be worded in such a way to articulate how to accomplish the vision. According to Peter Drucker, there are three requirements of a successful mission, they are: opportunities, competence, and commitment.¹⁰ The vision and mission would also have to have buy-in from the congregation to ensure a high level of commitment on the part of the members. Nothing can be done well unless people are committed.

In addition the church asked several essential questions to help craft the Vision and Mission. They were: What are the opportunities for ministry? Would we be competent in these areas? What is our level commitment? Are we likely to do a good job? Do they match our strengths? Do we really believe in this? Concentrating on these areas of concern and undergirding this process with prayer the church created the following shared Vision and Mission statements.

Our Vision: We are called to serve the Lord and the community in a number of diverse, but deeply connected ways: through prayer and worship, teaching, proclamation, service and outreach.

¹⁰ Ibid

Our Mission: New Life Christian Church is a community of faith reaching the hearts, soul, and mind of all people. We provide an atmosphere of worship that is life changing: a ministry that is compassionate, supportive and empowering of all people, through education and teaching of biblical truths. We are called to serve God and the community in a number of diverse, but deeply connect ways as we follow Christ.

Organizing a New Church

In the early organizing days the church found that there were many organizational and logistic pieces that had to be knitted together to create a foundation that would stand. As a church in formation in the Christian Church (DOC), NLCC had to produce an organizing and governing document. The church decided to use the Christian Church (DOC)'s Constitution and By-laws and adapted them to fit NLCC. Next the church would have to become incorporated. This process was done in and through our organization meetings. After writing the incorporation document, it was then registered with the Essex County Clerks Office, and the State of New Jersey. Once registered with the county and the State NLCC was incorporated June 25, 2000.

As stated earlier there were several discussions on whether or not to apply for tax-exempt status as 501c3 tax-exempt organization. Finally weighing the pros and cons, the church decided they would apply for 501c3 tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service(IRS). The application and documentation was filed with the IRS and in June of 2001 NLCC was granted tax- exempt status as a religious institution.

The growth of the church made it necessary to look for a permanent location that would serve the needs of the church to do ministry. For the first three years of NLCC there was no compensation for clergy or facilities. This along with the Tithes, offerings and fundraisers, the

small church was able to raise \$75,000 that would eventually be used as a down payment on the current building. Before that time NLCC sought to rent sacred space in churches, and other public facilities, none of which worked out. There were even two buildings that were under contract to purchase, both of which fell through. The church called these days the ‘Tabernacle faze’, where they had no permanent temple.¹¹ Through it all the church worshipped with excellence always keeping the vision and mission paramount.

Keep building while in search of a building

I need to pause here to share with congregations searching for a building for the purpose of worship, not to be so consumed with a building, but continue ‘building’. Church planters need to understand that their ministry must be more than a facility or a building. Too often churches purchase buildings or do building projects, and their primary focus becomes paying for and maintaining a facility, and loose their primary focus and mission.

In January of 2002, the Lord led this ‘Tabernacle Church’ to a small factory and warehouse located at 12 Prospect St., Bloomfield, NJ. The church began renting space that year in a small room in the factory, approximately 1000 square feet. The following year the building went on the market for sale. The North East Regional Minister of Christian Church (DOC), Rev. Lonnie Oates, and Eugene Randall, loan officer from Church Extension helped NLCC secure a loan with the Christian Church (DOC), Church Extension Fund to purchase the building for \$340,000.

New Life completed a \$150,000 renovation of the warehouse and factory converting it into a sanctuary and fellowship hall. The first service was held in March of 2003 with over one

¹¹ Exodus 36:8-39:43 NRSV

hundred people in attendance. Since then, NLCC is purchasing the building partnering with Disciples Church Extension Fund. The building houses the 100 seat chapel of New Life Christian Church (DOC); a 75 seat meeting/dining hall; a licensed Day Care Center, New Life Center for Education; a medical center, New Life Health and Wellness Center; and a mental health center, New Life Health Counseling Center. The church is host to AA and NA meetings on a weekly basis and has hosted retreats for recovering people.

Since January 2000, NLCC has evolved and grown into one of the pre-eminent churches in the City of Bloomfield, NJ. NLCC has been through it all, ups and downs, ins and outs; they have married loving couples including same gender couples, blessed children and funeralized those that have transitioned. Many souls have been baptized into the faith a result of the ministry at NLCC.

NLCC has a variety of ministries, all developed to aid in the quest for spiritual growth and wholeness. NLCC is Open, Affirming and supportive of all people regardless of age, race, creed, gender or sexual orientation. The church has classes and activities for every age group from the youngest baby to the "young at heart." Their longstanding success has not come without struggle, but is credited to a symbiotic relationship between their esteemed clergy, faithful trustees, devoted deacons, sparkling staff and most of all, a cadre of impassioned and committed people of God who continue to do the work God has called them to do.

Many families can say that because of the existence of NLCC, their lives have been enriched and they have been blessed because of the presence of the church in the community. NLCC is not just brick and mortar, but exists, rather, by the character of the people that are within their walls.

Open and Affirming (ONA)

One of the initial goals was to create and develop a safe place of worship and fellowship that would include LGBTQ people in the faith community. A place where diversity was honored and differences were celebrated within a Christian tradition.

One of NLCC's institutional tenants is that they are an Open and Affirming Church. Open and Affirming (**ONA**) is an official designation of congregations and other settings in the **United Church of Christ (UCC)** and Christian Church (DOC) affirming the full inclusion of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons (LGBT) in the church's life and ministry.¹²

NLCC has members that are both black and Gay. Being black, LGBTQ, and Christian are not mutually exclusive. You can be all three and more. We are all created in God's image and likeness. Because of NLCC's position on ONA and marriage equality they are considered by many in the faith community as unholy, counter cultural, and beyond redemption. However NLCC is firm in their conviction to serve all of God's people.

I grew up in a loving home with loving parents and siblings. One of my siblings is gay in whom I love. I could never understand why he was considered abnormal, defective, and unacceptable to God. I was raised to believe that God loves all of God's creation and has created us all different and we should celebrate our difference. Early in my ministry I was serving in ministries that were not excepting of any other lifestyles than that of hetaera sexual. As a minister, I could not minister in full integrity or fidelity because I believed in inclusivity and affirming the LGBTQ community. Which was counter-cultural to the traditional African

¹²Open and Affirming Coalition United Church of Christ <https://openandaffirming.org/ona/why/>

American Church community. NLCC is an open and affirming congregation that is liberal in their theology. We encourage free thought and independent biblical hermeneutics.

NLCC believes it is time for the faith community to become more inclusive. The faith community fosters homophobia, racism, sexism and all the other isms that should by this time be ‘was-isms.’ Week after week faithful members are attacked from church pulpits, Mosques, and Synagogues. The very place people come for healing and hope leave more wounded then when they came in. This is why more and more people are turning away from faith looking toward humanism and secularism.

Intolerance is an enemy of humanity. It breeds contempt and hatred. There are faithful Jews, Christians and Muslims that suffer in silence in their places of worship. It is through the vehicle of religion that bigotry, and discrimination against certain groups is sanctioned. Religion has been at the core of many of histories conflicts and atrocities conversely religion has also been the saving and sustaining factor in the world. I have observed prejudice, bias and ostracizing of LGBTQ community in the black church through its preaching, teaching and treatment of those they consider different.

According to the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ ‘All Are Welcome’ isn’t Enough.¹³ Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people of faith often experience emotional and spiritual injury in churches that condemn their capacity to love and seek love. Because they’ve learned that “All Are Welcome” usually doesn’t apply to them, they can’t assume that any church will be safe for them and their families. A public welcome by an

¹³ Ibib

Open and Affirming (ONA) church sends a clear message to LGBT seekers that they have a home in our church. A congregation's affirmation and support through an ONA covenant can be a life-changing and life-saving experience—especially for LGBT youth.

A public welcome to LGBT seekers helps churches grow. According to UCC when new ONA churches attract new members, many of them are young straight couples starting new families: they identify with the values ONA represents, and want their children to learn the faith in a welcoming church.¹⁴ By adopting an ONA covenant, a congregation is taking seriously St. Paul's admonition to "accept one another, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."¹⁵

One of the successes at NLCC is that they have created a safe place of worship and fellowship for the LGBTQ community where they honor and celebrate differences and work together for the common good within a Christian tradition. All are partakers of the gospel.

Resources NLCC has for the Christian Community & LGBTQ Population are:

- Training of Legal Ramifications of HIB and Marriage equality
- Setting a place at the table for all persons of faith, gender expressions and sexual orientations. Prevention of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) from the pulpit.
- A persistent voice for an open and inclusive church.
- Call congregations to be actively open and inclusive communities.
- Hold denominational leadership accountable to their denomination's vision of social justice, expecting fair play, honesty, integrity, risk and courage.

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ (Romans 15:7)NIV

- Develop denominational sensitive theological, biblical and spiritual resources.
- Provide intentional fellowship surrounding the issues of social justice, education LGBTQ community and empowerment.
- Sensitivity, Ethical Training for Clergy.
- Sensitivity Training for Clergy, Parishioners and interested stakeholders
- Support Group Marriage equality for couples of faith and searching for a deeper spiritual relationship.
- Participate in the broader social justice movement for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people by building alliances with other denominational-faith tradition and secular organizations that share similar concerns.
- Responsibly advocate for religious practices and policies that support democratic visions and an inclusive society.
- Intentionally connect our experiences of injustice with other forms of social discrimination and commit us to resist oppression in all its forms.

The success NLCC has had in the community stems, not only from our progress and progressive programs, but also from our people. God is doing some very exciting things in the hearts and lives of the people who call NLCC their church home.

Christian Church (DOC), Tradition

Why Christian Church (DOC) and not independent? The Christian Church (DOC) is most congruent with the churches theological perspective. In this organization there are no creeds. One of the mottos of the Disciples movement is ‘No Creed Just Christ’ where the Bible Speaks

we speak where the bible is silent we are silent. The Disciples have no creed but do have an Affirmation of Faith that serves as a guidepost for our movement. (See Appendix 1)

History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is an American movement that grew out of two movements seeking Christian unity that sprang up almost simultaneously in western Pennsylvania and Kentucky – a response against the rigid denominationalism of the early 1800s.¹⁶

Thomas and Alexander Campbell, a Presbyterian Scotch-Irish immigrant father and son in Pennsylvania, rebelled against the dogmatic sectarianism that kept members of different denominations and even factions within the same denomination from partaking of the Lord's Supper together. Walter Scott, an immigrant from Scotland, was a successful evangelist of the resulting Campbell movement as it separated from the Baptists.¹⁷

Barton W. Stone, a fifth-generation American in Kentucky and also a Presbyterian, objected to the use of creeds as tests of “fellowship” within the church, which were a cause of disunity, especially at the Lord's table. He was a key participant in the Restoration Movement following the Cane Ridge Revival of 1801 near Paris, KY.

“Christians,” the name adopted by Stone's movement, represented what he felt to be a shedding of denominational labels in favor of a scriptural and inclusive term. Campbell had similar reasons for settling on “Disciples of Christ” but he felt the term “Disciples” less presumptuous than “Christians.” (For an introduction to some of their ideas, see the Last Will

¹⁶ Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) History of the Disciples Early History <http://disciples.org/our-identity/history-of-the-disciples/>

¹⁷ Ibid

and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery – 1804 or the Declaration and Address – 1809.)

The aims and practices of the two groups were similar, and the Campbell and Stone movements united in 1832 in Lexington, KY after about a quarter of a century of separate development.¹⁸

The founders of the Christian Church hoped to restore Christian unity by returning to New Testament faith and practices. But the church found that even this led to division. One group which opposed practices not specifically authorized by the New Testament, such as instrumental music in the church and organized missionary activity, gradually pulled away. That group finally was listed separately in the 1906 federal religious census as the “Churches of Christ.”

Another group began a separation in 1926 over what it felt were too-liberal policies on the mission field in the practice of baptism. More than 40 years later (1967-69) some 3,000 of those congregations formally withdrew at the time of Disciples restructure. They refer to themselves as the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ.

A Heritage of Openness and Ecumenism

The Disciples have a long heritage of openness to other Christian traditions having come into existence as a 19th century protest movement against denominational exclusiveness. At the local level and beyond, Disciples are frequently involved in cooperative and ecumenical work.

Disciples have given leadership to the establishment of Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT) that brings together Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, Evangelicals and Pentecostal Christians to seek to make a common witness in the United States. The Rev. Richard L. Hamm, former General Minister and President, was CCT’s first full-time executive.

¹⁸ (Disciples of Christ Historical Society website.)

In 1989, the Disciples and the United Church of Christ declared “a relationship of full communion now exists between our two churches.” The ecumenical partnership rests on five pillars of acceptance and cooperation: a common confession of Christ; mutual recognition of members; common celebration of the Lord’s Supper/Holy Communion; mutual recognition and reconciliation of ordained ministries; and common commitment to mission.

Joint work between the Disciples’ Division of Overseas Ministries and the UCC’s Wider Church Ministries (formerly known as United Church Board for World Ministries), dates from 1967. World mission for both churches is now carried out by the Common Global Ministries Board, established in 1995.

In 1999, an official dialogue was initiated between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Church/Churches of Christ, and the Churches of Christ to explore greater understanding and develop greater trust among these three “streams” of the Stone-Campbell Movement.

The 2020 Vision

Richard Hamm, former General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) outlined a vision for the denomination that would set forth the framework for the first 20 years of the new millennium. Called the 2020 Vision, it highlights three marks of a faithful church: true community, a deep Christian spirituality, and a passion for justice. It was adopted by Disciples at the 2001 General Assembly.

The 2020 Vision highlights four priorities of the Christian Church:

- Formation of 1,000 new congregations 2020
- Transformation of 1,000 congregations by 2020
- The calling and forming of new leaders and the continued re-forming and development of

current leadership

- Becoming a pro-reconciling/anti-racist church

Hamm and Hope Partnership, a general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), home to New Church Ministry, call upon each Disciple and Disciples congregation, region, general unit, and related organization to consider, “How can the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) become a more faithful and growing church in the years ahead?”¹⁹

With this spirit and momentum to plant a new church, NLCC was well on its way of being a part of the 2020 Vision.

Since 2001, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has started 786 new churches and counting – toward the goal of 1,000 new congregations by the year 2020. We are growing our partnership in new ways to expand Disciples witness.²⁰

According to the Hope partnership, in the 1950s, more than 180 new Disciples congregations were formed in newly growing suburbs in the United States. The 1960s, social turmoil and issues with ecumenism led to the formation of only 60 congregations in the decade. In the 1970s, church planting was not a priority for the Disciples. Of the 70 churches planted in the 70s, very few exist today. In 1977, Convocation of the Christian Church challenged the denomination once again to engage in church planting. In the 1980s, the Church Advance Now program was established, resulting in 130 new church starts, nearly double the previous decade.

The 1990s saw about 120 new church plants. It became apparent that Disciples regions

¹⁹ Hope Partnership for Missional Transformation Copyright 2018(<http://www.hopepmt.org/plant/2020-vision/>)

²⁰Ibib

were losing interest in church planting because of the expense and lack of skilled planters.²¹

Preliminary discussions at the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) were captured in the book, “The 2020 Vision,” by then General Minister and President Dick Hamm.²² In his book, Hamm challenges the church to plant 1,000 new congregations by the year 2020.²³

Since the former Church Extension had been seriously engaged in supporting new church planting for more than 100 years, Church Extension directors accepted the challenge of providing leadership to the Disciples church planting efforts.

In November 2000, Church Extension invited regional partners, a handful of church planters and other partners to attend the New Church Summit in Indianapolis. At this summit, the goal of planting 1,000 congregations was adopted, and partners were challenged by church planting experts to think about church planting in a new way. It was at this summit that a new spirit of partnership emerged with all ministries of the church working toward the same goal.

By March 2001, the New Church Ministry team was formed and new strategies for church planting were implemented. The new church movement celebrated 40 new congregations in its first year.

By September 2002, the New Church Ministry team sponsored its first New Church Planter training for more than 40 people. By the end of 2002, the movement celebrated 60 new congregations.

In 2003, during the second New Church Planter Training, New Church Ministry received word that it had been awarded a \$1.67 million grant for Sustaining Pastoral Excellence in New

²¹ Ibid

²² Hamm Richard, *2020 Vision for the Christian Church (DOC)*, Atlanta, GA.: Chalice Press, 2001

²³ IBIB

Church Ministry from the Lilly Endowment. This grant enabled New Church Ministry to add to staff, while increasing the sustainability of new church projects with an excellent coaching program. By the end of that year, the movement celebrated 80 new projects.

In January 2012, New Church Ministry became a part of Hope Partnership for Mission Transformation. As an important part of the Hope Partnership team, the New Church Movement is alive and stronger than ever!

The Disciples African American Tradition

The earliest congregations of the Stone-Campbell Movement in Kentucky and Pennsylvania included both European American and African American members. The Colored Christian Church was organized in Midway, Ky. in 1834. Thus, African Americans have been part of this movement from the very beginning.

In 1917, the National Christian Missionary Convention was formed as the result of the determination of Preston Taylor, a former slave, who was minister of the Gay Street Christian Church in Nashville, Tenn. The purpose was to empower the witness of Black Disciples as members of the whole church through a partnership with white Disciples that recognized Black leadership in an era of blatant white supremacy and paternalism. For over a half-century, this convention conducted annual gatherings in which participants received in-service training in Christian education and leadership, program information, and inspiration for fulfilling their mission as Disciples of Christ.

In the late 1960s, around the time the Church adopted The Design, the program and staff of the National Christian Missionary Convention merged with other general Disciples organizations. The Administrative Secretary of the Convention became a staff associate of the General Minister and President and program staff members were integrated with the staff of

Homeland Ministries (now known as Disciples Home Missions). At the same time, a new organization, the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), was lodged in the Office of the General Minister and President as part of a merger agreement.²⁴ The Convocation conducts biennial assemblies emphasizing education and inspiration.

²⁴ Nationalconvocation.org

CHAPTER 2: CHALLENGE STATEMENT

As pastor of the New Life Christian Church (DOC), Bloomfield, NJ, a church begun 17 years ago, I am concerned that we are losing some of our initial purpose and mission. This project will assess and evaluate NLCC's current mission and vision. Further, the project seeks to maintain the health, growth and relevance of NLCC in the 21st century.

Goal 1

Complete an assessment of NLCC ministries.

Goal 2

Recruit current stakeholders to participate in a constructive survey that will measure health and growth of identified ministries of the church. The purposive target comprised adults, over 18 years of age who have been attending the church for at least two years.

Goal 3

Juxtapose the Vision and Mission based on assessments (Surveys and Interviews).

Essential Questions

To complete this project it was necessary to create essential questions that would guide the research and create assessment tools necessary to complete the aforementioned challenge statement and supporting goals. The following questions were used as guide posts for the research and assessments that were used.

1. Where should we be?

This is a reflection of potential, not current reality. Here the church looked at stating what the priorities should be. In light of God's purpose and design for the church, this enabled the

researcher to zero in on what the ministry should be doing to accomplish God's purpose, and the resources needed to do it. Resources included the right people, with the gifts, abilities, passions, experience, and maturity for the various ministries.²⁵ Resources also included finances for possible salaries, training, and materials, and facilities that are the right size, decor, and location.

2. Where have we been?

Answering this question enabled the researcher to see the progress that has been made. It also gave the opportunity to exam failures and successes the ministry experienced. This lead to praise and penitence.

3. Where are we now?

This guided the researcher to list current ministries and their effectiveness in fulfilling God's purpose and design for the church. Examine the adequacy of current resources to do the ministries listed. The researcher here looked at the current health of the church. A church health inventory and survey was used to measure members feelings and opinions concerning the health of the church.

Qualitative data was collected and analyzed. The qualitative data included how people felt about the ministry of the church, the effectiveness of the present programs, and the adequacy of current organizational structures, staff, and facilities.

4. Where will we be if we keep going as we are now?

Here was a chance to project ahead to what will happen if the church made no significant changes in the ministry. The researcher was faced with accepting whether or not to be satisfied with this forecast (i.e. how well needs were being met, how close is the church from realizing

²⁵Ministry Tools Resource Center <https://mintools.com/ministry-profiling.htm>

God's purposes and priorities). Using the assessment data, it was determined there was need for improvement.

4. Where will we go from here?

In the final stages of this project the researcher drafted a proposal based on the findings of the data collected. An action plan was created that set goals that would enable NLCC to better meet the needs, which surfaced through the assessment. The action plan has recommended strategies to accomplish those goals. This includes the initiation of new ministries and the elimination of current ministries. It involves the reorganization of current staff and volunteer workers. This also required moving workers into ministry's that are more suitable to their spiritual gifts, passions, and personalities.

Plan of Implementation:

Step 1: The researcher did a preliminary workshop on October 18, 2017 using Thom Rainer's book "Autopsies of a Deceased Church."²⁶ At this workshop a study was done identifying indicators of a dying church. Officers looked at "Early Symptoms of Sickness and 10 factors leading to Death" (See Appendix 2)

Step 2: A workshop was held on November 1, 2018 that used research relevant to NLCC's vision and mission (i.e. New Church starts and sustainability, Church growth from an African American perspective, Church Health vs. church growth, Black Open and Affirming congregations and the House Church Movement.) as it's focus.

²⁶ Thom Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church, 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing. 2014

The officers discussed what they liked about NLCC and areas of concern. Many liked that it is a small church. They all said that it feels like family and that they feel comfortable. They also stated that they liked that NLCC is an ONA church, welcoming to all.

At the workshop members were asked to complete an evaluation as part of the doctoral study of Stephen M. Webb, doctoral student at New York Theological Seminary. (See Appendix_3) In completing this evaluation, they were assisting him in understanding the identified ministries at New Life Christian Church. Participation in the survey was voluntary. It was explained that they were not required to participate in the survey and there was no compensation offered for doing so. They could stop participation in this survey at any time.

It was further explained that by completing the evaluation, the writer was trying to objectively assess how each ministry fits in with the broader mission and vision of our church and if NLCC was doing a good job of supporting this ministry so it can successfully serve others.

Step 3: On Sunday November 19, 2017 a constructive survey based on NLCC's mission and current ministry's was distributed in church. 32 participants anonymously took the Church Health Inventory (CHI) that measured 7 areas of ministry. This process is explained in detail in chapter 5.

Step 4: A workshop was held on January 25, 2018 where data outcomes were analyzed and a corrective action plan was created. Officers and Stakeholders created a Ministry Action Plan (MAP) to improve the health of the church. This process is explained in detail in chapter 7.

Step 5: On February 15, 2018 a follow up session with the officers if NLCC was held to ensure the Ministry Action Plan (MAP) is being implemented with fidelity. SMART goals were developed and implemented to improve achievement and success. The SMART goals clarified exactly what was expected and the measure used to determine if the goal is achieved and

successfully completed. Benchmarks and timelines were reviewed and adjustments were made as needed. A schedule for MAP review meetings was created for the year. The importance of continued assessments and data review to measure health and growth was discussed.

CHAPTER 3: PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Is the church meeting the vision and mission? Is it clearly articulated? Is it relevant for the 21st century? Does the mission ensure the church is healthy and growing?

The literature review necessary for an informed approach to this project included examining areas of New Church starts and sustainability, Church growth from an African American perspective, Church Health vs. church growth, Black Open and affirming congregations and the House Church Movement.

NLCC has faced many challenges including declining and changing membership, financial hardships, and how to remain relevant and meet the needs of the people we serve. Along with the challenges there have also been major achievements and huge successes in the life of NLCC. This project gave the church an assessment of where it is, what has worked, what has not, and where do they go from here.

It is apparent that mainline protestant churches everywhere are declining. The pews are emptier on Sunday morning. Neighborhoods have changed. Once-proud buildings show signs of wear and tear, and the cost to maintain them pulls money away from outreach and ministry. In the U.S., the numbers are not encouraging. In North America all Protestant denominations declined 9.5 percent in the past ten years representing a loss of 4.4 million people. This loss exists in spite of a population increase of 11.4 percent (or 24 million people) over the same period. No one county in America has a greater churched population today than it did ten years ago. With more than 195 million un-churched people, America is the third largest mission field in the world and the thirteenth largest receiver of missionaries. America desperately needs

healthy churches that will grow and reproduce and multiply (Logan, “Church Planting”).²⁷

Although decline does not necessarily mean a congregation will close or die, it does open the door to assess the old mission and vision. Church growth models that worked 30, 50, or even 100 years ago no longer fit churches’ circumstances. It may be time to ask, “Is the church’s vision and mission relevant for the 21st century?”

Church Growth

The church growth movement began with the publication of Donald McGarvan’s Book “*The Bridges of God*.²⁸ The church growth movement is defined as a movement within evangelical Christianity which aims to grow churches based on research, sociology, analysis, etc. McGavran stated, “It is God's will that women and men become disciples of Jesus Christ and responsible members of Christ's church.” This movement has made major contributions to Christendom over the years. It has opened the minds and challenged the perceptions and approaches of many church leaders. It challenged them to be better, to rethink how and why they do things, and to improve the way they do church, especially in the areas of evangelism and missions. These aspects have been good, but there has been a negative aspect in church growth thinking that has done the opposite to the church. This thinking has caused churches to close themselves off to the people God brings them, concentrate on research over Scripture, chase trends to the detriment of what God calls us to, and concentrate on pleasing people and not God. It is the researchers goal to use both research-based techniques to measure the health of the church and scripture to guide the process.

²⁷ Bob Logan, *Church Planting* <http://www.churchplanting.com/bob-logan/#.Wmj02MMIGjQ>

²⁸ Donald McGarvan. *The Bridges of God*

Most of what has been written in the last 40 years of church growth has, at best, fallen short of what Scripture directs and, at worst, is an abomination. The focus has been on manmade principles defused from business paradigms and comparative thinking. These principles have not always been based on what God clearly defined in Scripture. Yes, there have been some good ideas and some of the church growth principles are from Biblical principles.

Church Growth: From an African American Perspective

Pastoring a predominately African American church that was organized 17 years ago, I have had to rethink what church growth is. Over the past twenty years there has been a significant change in the life of the African American Church. Prior to 1980, the phenomenon of a local church with membership in the thousands was not the norm in most African American Faith communities. If a church had 500 members it was considered a large church; a church with 1000 members was considered huge. The truth of the matter is that the average church in America, black, white or otherwise has about 85 to 125 members, a statistic that holds true to this day.²⁹

According to usachurches.org, church size does not refer to the physical size of the church building, or the number of seats in the church building, or even the number of people who are members of the church.³⁰ Rather, size refers to the church's average weekend attendance; in other words, approximately how many people attend church services on a typical weekend. There is a saying in the church 'Preacher numbers', which refers to exaggerated numbers for church membership. In reality a church's membership is based on the number in attendance, multiplied by the number of services. It is also important to understand that church attendance

²⁹ Donald Hillard, *Church Growth From an African American Perspective*, (Valley Forge, PA 2006) p.2
³⁰ usachurches.org

tends to fluctuate. For example, weekend attendance has been shown to decline at many churches during the summer months.

In the process of reevaluating what church growth is, the writer also had to repent. There is a temptation as a pastor, to look at other ministry's that have larger congregations and be tempted to covet what other churches have. These are grounds for repentance. A few years ago a local church down the street from NLCC was building a new 3 million dollar facility. Sunday after Sunday I would ride past that church on my way to NLCC, in my mind I would say, "what are they doing that we are not doing." I know I preach as good as the preacher, our music ministry is just as good as there's, we have just as many if not more social service ministry's as they do. How come they are growing and building a new facility and we are not? I had to repent privately and publically for envy, covetousness, and lack of gratitude for what God has given NLCC.

The media, mainstream as well as in social media has glamorized and even romanticized the mega church. As Rev. Dr. Donald Hilliard explains in his book *Church Growth from an African American Perspective*, that mega doesn't necessarily mean "major" or "relevant".

³¹Thousands of small churches are faithfully making a difference. Whether we are talking about the storefront in Brooklyn or the rural church in the "country", smaller sized churches are keeping the charge of the Great Commission, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:" ³²

Unfortunately the "bigger is better" mentality has left many Christians including clergy with an unrealistic expectation of church growth. The tendency to lift up a few mega churches as a model for church growth has left many pastors and church leaders frustrated and discouraged

³¹ Ibid 29

³² (Matt. 28:19) NRSV

as if they are not in the will of God. When Churches such as Lakewood Church in Houston Texas, or World Changers Church International in College Park, Georgia, is the standard for church growth, it is only natural to want to know, how did they do it? Why is my church not growing exponentially, how come my budget is not 20 million dollars? What is the secret to their growth? What process and methods did they use to attract so many people?

The mega church phenomenon has helped to further the gospel, in that it has reached many people that may have otherwise never been exposed to the gospel. Many people enjoy the anonymity of a mega church, allowing them to be one in the number and not having to be apart of true koinonia. Many are satisfied with being in the number, one in the crowd, and shouting Hosanna when Jesus passes by, but do not commit to, “Pick up your cross and follow me.”³³ There are those in the crowd either in the auditorium or watching on TV, that just want to be entertained with no real commitment.

Metrics tell us many important facts, including helping us to see things objectively. But they’re not the only way to make judgments about ministry success. Whenever we think of church growth, we automatically think of increase in size or wealth, because that is the way society and our educational system has taught us to think. It is easy to measure quantitative growth, however it is much more difficult to measure qualitative growth. Qualitative growth can be seen in lives changing, families changing, men becoming better fathers, women becoming better mothers, where there was pain and despair, there is now hope and optimism. It is with qualitative assessments the researcher measured the health and well being of NLCC. Any definition of church growth that doesn’t allow for, even celebrate, churches that contribute in non-numerical ways is incomplete.

³³ (Matt 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23) NRSV

The Church in the community

Across the years ministry is always fluid and changing. Ministry is not a snapshot but a video that continues to change. One of the problems in the church is that parishioners come to church and take a snapshot, take that picture and put it on their refrigerator and look at it everyday. The problem comes in when they are missing, or not actively participating in the ongoing life and evolution of the church, and when they return to church the picture they have in the snapshot is not what is going on in the church when they return.

According to the Pew Research Center, More than a quarter of Americans (27%) say they currently attend religious services at least once or twice a month, but that there was once a time in their adult lives when they attended less regularly than they do now.³⁴ And more than one-in-five adults (22%) say they currently attend religious services infrequently or never (a few times a year, at most), but that there was once a time when they attended more often.³⁵

More than one-in-five Americans (22%) attend religious services no more than a few times a year, but say there was once a time in their lives when they attended more often. When asked an open-ended question about why their rate of religious attendance has declined, half cited practical issues as the reason. This includes one-in-five who say they are too busy to attend religious services regularly (e.g., because of their work schedule) and one-in-ten who say attending church is not high on their list of personal priorities (e.g., because they have “gotten out of the habit” or are “too lazy” to attend regularly).³⁶

³⁴ Pew Research Center *Religious attendance fluid for many Americans* AUG 23, 2016
<http://www.pewforum.org/2016/08/23/2-religious-attendance-fluid-for-many-americans/>

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

About one-in-four infrequent attenders who used to attend more often (26%) say something changed with their own personal beliefs or with their church. And an additional 17% mention social factors; in some cases, they say they used to attend religious services more often in order to accompany a family member or friend who no longer requires or expects their company.³⁷

Churches are Dying.

“Autopsy of a Deceased Church” by Thom Rainer is a study of churches in America that have closed their doors.³⁸ From Rainer’s research and autopsies of churches that have died, he has discovered consistent themes amongst the dead. Through Rainer’s work, the researcher decided to exam NLCC to see if they were suffering any of the symptoms of those churches that have died. In addition it lead the researcher to measure the health of the church. And as with any examination, they are not always pleasant or is the diagnosis welcomed. Examinations can be painful, eye opening and frightening. However they are necessary if we want to live a healthy life.

One Cause of death of the churches studied was what Rainer describes as the “Great Commission becomes the Great Omission”³⁹

Most churches begin with a great heart and effort for the Great Commission. The methods used become the focus, rather than the Great Commission itself. As a consequence the great Commission becomes the Great Omission. I was looking at old NLCC pictures when they worshipped in the back yard one summer; there were close to 100 people in the backyard

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Thom Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church, 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive*, Nashville TN: B&H Publishing, 2014

³⁹ Ibid

that summer. When NLCC worshipped in Mrs. Webb house in West Orange there were 50 to 60 people every Sunday. Although looking back can be fun, and nostalgia is good, because we certainly need to remember when; we cannot stay in the past or even recreate the past. We can look back but we have to continue to move forward, we cannot make progress always looking in the review mirror. What the autopsies discovered is at the heart of dying and dead churches are that there was a lot of ‘Remember When’ instead of moving forward.⁴⁰

Churches have to look at the reason behind those years of church growth and expansion. Thriving churches have the Great commission as the center of their vision, while dying churches have forgotten the command of Christ.⁴¹

What is the great Commission, since we may be suffering from ‘Great Commission Amnesia.’⁴² In Matt 28:19-20 we read, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”⁴³

The imperative in those verses is “go” But as we go, there are several sub-commands. We are to make disciples. We are to baptize and we are to teach. Those are a lot of action words. Dead and dying churches have forgotten the Great Commission somewhere in their history. The writer is concerned that NLCC is suffering from what Rainer calls ‘Great Commission Amnesia’.

⁴⁴ I’m being to gentle here, I’m often accused of being too nice. Amnesia implies that NLCC is not at fault, that they no longer had the ability to recall or to know what they were supposed to do. NLCC hasn’t forgotten, they have decided not to act on God’s Great Commission. I suggest

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid 38

⁴³ (Matt 28:19-20)NRSV

⁴⁴ Ibid 38

that NLCC is not suffering from Great Commission Amnesia but great commission disobedience.

The Great Commission requires at least two points of obedience from church members. 1) They are to GO and 2) they are to depend totally on the power of Christ. That's why Jesus reminded them: "I am with you always"⁴⁵

Christ is ready and willing to work through us. Rainer suggests churches decided to stop going and stopped depending on Christ. But let me press my case: Going requires effort. Now the results are dependent upon God, but obedience takes effort and work. And obedience in Christ's power means that we are praying to Jesus to reach others. That's evangelism. (Then break it apart: EV ANGEL ISM. The word "angel" means "messenger," and that the prefix "ev" means "good." So the word means: "Good-message-ism." An Ev-angel-ist is someone who shares the good message with someone else.)

Evangelism requires an "other" focus that requires the church to look beyond themselves. It requires them to become uncomfortable. It requires them to go. Obedience to the great commission has faded, it was gradual, once NLCC was on fire about what Christ was doing and then they got caught up with what Christ had done. The church became more caught up with what Christ gave them, then what they could do for Christ?

NLCC wanted the same results of yester year but were not willing to expend the effort. Go, make disciples, baptize and teach.

So how do resuscitate the church. Thom Rainer Suggests:⁴⁶

⁴⁵ (Matt 28:20)NRSV

⁴⁶ Ibid 38

1. Be willing to Go. Go into the community, minister to the people. Invite your unchurched friends and relatives to church. You want it to happen but you are not willing do what it takes. It takes Prayer, it takes sacrifice, and it takes hard work.

2. Here's the bigger issue. Even if the church was to grow on its own, members only accept growth if the new members were like them and the church would continue to do church like its always been done. When all is said and done, the reality is that at the heart of the matter, some members of NLCC don't want the church to grow. And this is a 'heart' issue. So before churches die of heart failure they need to resuscitate the heart. Bring out the AED machine and the defibrillator. The church is suffering from heart failure.

But I know one that can restore a broken heart. And that one is the Paraclete, That's the Holy Ghost, counselor, helper, advocate, comforter. Now you may not know the Paraclete, but you do know parachute, you do know paramedic.

Jesus told Peter that the church will never die. "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the forces of hades will not over power it"⁴⁷ Indeed the church will never die, but churches have and are dying. As many as 100,000 churches in America are showing signs of decline toward death.⁴⁸

Shifting Church Growth Paradigms

A couple of decades ago the prevalent paradigm for growing a church was named after a famous line in the movie, *Field of Dreams* with Kevin Kostner. In that movie, Ray, an Iowa farmer, heard a voice that said, "If you build it, he will come." After discerning what it was he

⁴⁷ (Matt 16:18)NRSV.

⁴⁸ Ibid 7

was to build, he turned part of his farm into a baseball field where baseball players from the past (including his father) would come out of the cornfields to play ball.

In a similar manner, churches in years past seemingly believed that if they built a nice facility and offered excellent services in the form of preaching, music, and children's ministry then people would come. In essence, they believed, "If they built it, they would come." But as Ed Stetzer and others suggest, although this paradigm saw great success, it isn't as effective as it once was.⁴⁹ According to Stetzer and others, this method has reached most of the people it's going to reach.⁵⁰ In all reality, those who don't attend church aren't sitting around thinking, "Man, I sure do wish I could find a church where the preacher held my attention, that the music was lively, and that my children wouldn't be bored." In many areas, churches like this are as numerous as Walgreens or the local dollar store.

The new paradigm for church growth in the 21st Century in North America, according to Derwin Gray, Lead Pastor of Transformation Church in Rock Hill, SC, is soul care.⁵¹ In other words, churches should shift their primary paradigm to investing energy and resources into growing souls. In fact, Derwin states that the most important work in a church is to care for people's souls.⁵² In the latest Ministry Grid training video, Derwin encourages churches to cast a vision for soul care so that their fruit may be used by God to reach those who are far away from Christ.

⁴⁹ Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*, *Planting Missional Churches* 2003

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Derwin Gray. *Transformation Church* in Rock Hill, SC <https://newchurches.com/blogs/shifting-church-growth-paradigms/>

⁵² Ibid

For Derwin and the Transformation Church, their vision statement is based upon the *Shema*⁵³ (Hebrew: “Hear”), the Jewish confession of faith made up of three scriptural texts (Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 11:13–21; Numbers 15:37–41) (Deut 6; also see Matt 22:36)—serves as their vision for soul care. It is, “To be a multi-ethnic, multi-generational, mission-shaped community that loves God completely (Upward), ourselves correctly (Inward), and our neighbors compassionately (Outward).⁵⁴

Soul care begins vertically with our continued response to the Lord and His love for us. Everything about our being, who we are, should be filtered through the lens of God’s love for us and our love for Him. We know that God’s love for us was ultimately demonstrated through the giving of His only Son (John 3:16); thus, our love in response, should be ultimately demonstrated by offering up our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1).

In addition, soul care also consists of inwardly applying the work of the gospel whereby the Spirit conforms us more into the image of Jesus. Paul explains in his letter to the church at Colossae they are to *put to death* the earthly things (Col 3:5) and to *put on the new self*, “which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator”⁵⁵ As believers grow in the knowledge of Jesus, the Spirit works to conform them more into the image of Jesus. As a result, they live out their true identity by imaging (mirroring) Jesus—His life and kingdom—to a watching world.

House Church

The House Church for many congregations is a good model. NLCC started as a house church. House Churches serve the needs of people whether that is one or one thousand. Phillip

⁵³<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shema>

⁵⁴ Derwin Gray Transformation Church in Rock Hill, SC <https://newchurches.com/blogs/shifting-church-growth-paradigms/>

⁵⁵ (Col 3:9,10) NRSV

left the revival and went to evangelize one Ethiopian Eunuch.⁵⁶ Some times smaller is bigger, I am reminded of the first computer, cell phone, the disciples and the apostles that turned this world upside down. According to the American pollster George Barna, as many as 30,000 house churches were established as of 2009, and it is estimated 6 – 12 million Americans attend them.⁵⁷ Those aren't easy figures to track, as you can imagine. Places like China and nations in the Middle East have underground church house churches flourishing even under persecution. What does that look like, and why is it a better fit for you than a traditional church?

Small Churches

Brandon O'Brien, associate editor for *Leadership Journal*, has written a new book, *The Strategically Small Church*.⁵⁸ In this work, he seeks to demonstrate how small churches are uniquely equipped for success in today's culture.

Brandon writes a "strategically small" church is one that has learned to recognize and leverage the inherent strengths of being small. Being strategically small means that instead of trying to overcome your congregation's size, you have learned to use it to strategic ministry advantage.

One of the advantages smaller congregations offer are opportunity for developing intergenerational relationships. The hallmark of large churches is age-segmented ministry,

⁵⁶ (Acts 8:26-40) NRSV

⁵⁷ George Barna, *House Churches are More Satisfying to Attenders Than are Conventional Churches*, <https://www.barna.com/research/house-churches-are-more-satisfying-to-attenders-than-are-conventional-churches/>

⁵⁸ Brandon J. O'Brien, *The Strategically Small Church*. Minneapolis MN:Bethany House, 2010

programs designed to separate children from youth, youth from adults, young adults from seniors. When small churches imitate this model, they undercut their advantage for fostering intergenerational relationships.

The house church, family church, and small church model might be the new paradigm. Could it be that God is tired of the business of church? The buildings, the programs, the distractions; could it be that God wants all the glory. Not the preacher or the arena that you purchased. But God wants the focus, the intimacy and the relationship that can only be shared in a small loving environment.

It is this writer's opinion that NLCC had it right in the beginning starting as a house Church. The renewal of house churches and similar groups, in the nineteen eighties already theologians and church practitioners were saying that spiritual renewal was to a large extent taking place in house churches in all cultures, rather than in conventional, traditional churches.⁵⁹

A study of small house churches in South Africa showed significant growth of Christians in the black African population in churches that used small group principles.⁶⁰ The fact that Africans, are traditionally a tribal people, are relationship orientated, functioning in a system of extended families, must be kept in mind. African ethos of the extended family, of tribal unity and care, was reincarnated to a certain extent in African Independent Churches (AIC). The AIC's are churches among the poorest of the poor, operating without any external financial aid. They have an ethos of helping one another in all walks of life, allowing their members to survive under harsh conditions. They develop stronger family ties and work at the uplifting of their people.

⁵⁹ (Birkey, 1988, pp.11,13ff,22,32-33,56, 63,76ff,115ff)

⁶⁰ Dawid Venter. (1999). "Globalization and the Cultural Effects of the World- Economy in a Semiperiphery: The Emergence of African Indigenous Churches in South Africa." *Journal <~World-SystemsResearch* <http://jwsr.ucr.edu/> 5: 104-126. 1999 Dr. Dawid Venter.

This approach argues well for the future. Fellowship and mutual concern are basic elements of a true and meaningful religion.”⁶¹

Commenting on the growth of small-group churches, including in the AIC’s, Venter stated that the intimacy and personal nature of this approach had been a strong growth factor. He added that the importance of small groups as primary socializing units, as faith communities, could not be stressed enough.⁶²

It could well be said that the original small group/house church (in the NT sense) was the one Jesus organized and gathered with Him. All along Christ had emphasized the importance of a deeper community and ‘being together,’ even if it entailed only two or three (Mt.18:20). Jesus spent three years living and working in fellowship together with a small group of disciples. He actually spent more time with His disciples than with everybody else in the world put together. He ate with them, slept with them, and talked with them for the greater part of His active ministry.” These disciples not only learned from Christ but shared a depth of community that was the prototype of early church koinonia. Though the Twelve were all men, Jesus shared deep koinonia with a number of women, up to and maybe beyond the degree acceptable within the cultural context. The home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus provided one opportunity for this; and Luke 8:2-3 and Mark 15:41 mention other women who shared this deep community with Jesus.

Larger churches often promote small groups within the church so their members can have more intimate relationships with others. The small church is already a small group where such

⁶¹ IBIB

⁶² IBIB

relationships can develop. When a person becomes a member of a small congregation, he or she doesn't just join a church, he or she becomes a member of the family.⁶³

Small Learning Communities

Allow the writer to press the case that smaller is better. It has been the experience of the writer that God has provided small communities that are meaningful, substantial, and cohesive. Growing up my maternal grandfather was a small business owner. Who owned a social club in Montclair NJ that provided a needed outlet for African American middle class men in the 1950s, 60s, 70s and 80. The George Washington Carver Social Club was a small business that sustained a family, and provided a needed service in the community, small communities of fellowship.

My father was a small business owner of a Foreign Car Mechanic Shop. Leslie Leon McDonald Webb an immigrant from Bermuda came to the US in the early 1950s trained as a Foreign Car mechanic. After working for Foreign Car dealers in Brooklyn NY and in NJ he opened a small business that sustained and provided a middle class life style for his family. Although a great mechanic in which larger car dealerships would bring cars to him to analyze and repair, he never expanded and remained a small business owner until his retirement. This small business was a staple in the community.

I am a school administrator of an alternative school. One of the mandates for Alternative Education is small class size. I have experienced my greatest success in small learning communities. The 'bigger is better' and 'one-size fits all' does not work when measuring church growth. The house church, and small church model might be the new paradigm.

⁶³ Bickers, Dennis. *The Healthy Small Church, Diagnosis and Treatment for the Big Issues*. Kansas City, MO: Dennis and Beacon Hill Press, 2005

It could well be said that the original small group/house church in the NT was the one Jesus organized and gathered with Him. Christ emphasized the importance of a deeper community and ‘being together,’ even if it entailed only two or three (Mt.18:20). Jesus spent three years living and working in fellowship together with a small group of disciples. “He actually spent more time with His disciples than with everybody else in the world put together. He ate with them, slept with them, and talked with them for the most part of His entire active ministry.” These disciples not only learned from Christ but shared a depth of community that was the prototype of early church koinonia. Though the Twelve were all men, Jesus shared deep koinonia with a number of women, up to and maybe beyond the degree acceptable within the cultural context. The home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus provided one opportunity for this; and Luke 8:2-3 and Mark 15:41 mention other women who shared this deep community with Jesus.

Could it be that God is tired of the business of church? The building projects, the expansion programs, the distractions, could it be that God wants the glory. Not the preacher or the arena that he or she purchased. But God wants the focus, the intimacy and the relationship that can only be shared in a small loving environment.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS

The goal of doing a constructive assessment was to strengthen and build up the Body of Christ not condemn or divide it. It provided accountability and also a sense of ownership for those involved in the process. As a result of the church health assessment, the writer identified strengths on which to build and weaknesses on which to work. The assessment further helped to determine if new ministries should be initiated and if any existing ministries should be terminated.

The researcher used the Missouri Baptist Church Vital Signs of a Healthy Church Survey (CHI).⁶⁴ Permission was given to use their revitalization survey. (See Appendix 4) The Vital Signs Church Health Assessment Tool(CHI) was developed for Missouri Baptist Churches to use in determining what they are doing well and areas where they could be doing better. The church health consultants of the Missouri Baptist Churches invite church leaders to download the assessment pages and make as many copies as you need.⁶⁵

Methodology

This was an evaluative study in the descriptive mode that utilized a researcher- designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was qualitative and assessed the insights of the congregation. The tabulation of these surveys provided an indication of the health of NLCC.

Population and Subjects

⁶⁴ Missouri Baptist Convention Copyright © 2015 <https://mobaptist.org/church-revitalization/church-health-assessment-tool/>

⁶⁵ Ibid

The sample size of 32 members in the church was determined according to the size of the congregation's adult worship attendance.

Variables

The dependent variable of this research project is overall church health based on the CHI. The independent variables of this study are each of the categories assessed in the surveys, they include Sunday School Discipleship, Evangelism, Leadership, Worship, Fellowship, Mission and Stewardship. This was operationalized into subsets that are Critical, Unhealthy, Marginal, and Healthy.

Data Collection

After soliciting participation during the announcement portion of morning Worship, members were asked to participate in completing the CHI and encouraged to participate in the project. The members that responded were given copies of the survey, a return envelope, and detailed instructions regarding the administration of the survey. Designated church leaders were asked to oversee the distribution and collection of the surveys.

The completed surveys were returned to the researcher, and tabulated. The results were analyzed to determine the overall health of NLCC, and the correlation between church health and church growth. The health was compared to particular indices of growth. A positive relationship between health and growth was discovered.

Limitations and Generalizability

In addition, a host of other intervening variables were not controlled and are outside the scope of this study. This study focused on a convenient sampling and the voluntary participation of church members. A researcher-designed questionnaire was developed to measure the Health Characteristics. The instrument had seventy items that were answered on a five-point Likert scale. Members were asked to complete a survey as part of the doctoral study of Stephen M. Webb, doctoral student at New York Theological Seminary. The survey helped determine the initial challenge of the project; the relevancy of the mission, vision and ministry of the church. Participation in this survey was voluntary and anonymous. Members were not required to participate in this survey and there was no compensation offered for doing so. Members could stop participation in this survey at any time. (See Appendix 5)

The Survey analyzed 7 areas of concern that many metrics use to assess church growth that being Sunday School Discipleship, Evangelism, Leadership, Worship, Fellowship, Mission and Stewardship.

On a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low; 5 being high), participants were asked to rate the aforementioned areas of ministry.

32 current members participated in the survey that was developed from the Missouri Baptist Convention Church Health Inventory staff. Church Health Inventory (CHI) was then modified for NLCC. 32 participants anonymously took the Church Health Inventory. The CHI measured areas 7 areas of ministry. The instrument determined if the ministry was at a critical, unhealthy, marginal or healthy level.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

As an educator for the past thirty- two years and a school administrator for eighteen of those years I have used assessment data to determine both teaching and learning outcomes. I have studied how some schools have made progress and others do not. I have looked at highly effective schools to see what makes the difference. The answer is fairly obvious. Effective schools use information (Data) that is available to them to continuously improve. Those improvements might be related to the culture of the school, cleanliness of the facility, or the instructional program. The data information is then used to focus the efforts of the staff members in areas of strength and need. The problem with the church and the faith community is not that they don't have access to information and data; rather Churches are awash in information about all aspects of their operation. Some churches and schools just choose to ignore the information that is available to them. Other churches take a look at the information, perhaps take time to acknowledge the problem, and then do nothing about it further. And still other churches examine the data, develop an intervention plan, and then fail to implement or monitor the plan.

Schools that make significant improvement use information available to them to continuously grow and develop, specifically in the area of instruction.⁶⁶ Starting with the assumption that opportunities for improvement always exists, we must purposefully seek out errors, understand their causes and effects, and then fix them for continuous improvement to

⁶⁶ Cheryl James- Ward, Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and Dianne Lapp. *Using Data to Focus Instructional Improvement*. Alexandria, VA:ASCD, 2013

occur.⁶⁷ As such, continuous assessments can be used by virtually any educational or church system to study and improve the experiences and outcomes of the people who teach and learn.⁶⁸

Assessments measure growth and proficiency, assessments are used to drive planning and instruction. It is the writer's goal to use assessment data to move the church towards transformation, growth and progress. For the purpose of this project, two assessments were used to measure the health of the church, the Health Ministry Evaluation and the Church Health Inventory; the data will be used to address the following questions: ([See Appendix 6](#)). After completing the assessments, the essential questions were revisited:

1. Where have we been?

Answering this question enabled NLCC to see the progress and mistakes they have made. There was an underlying assumption that the church needed improvement that problems existed, and were not readily apparent to the church leadership. It was the researchers job to seek them out, analyze them, and find ways to address them.

2. Where are we now?

The Church Health Inventory (CHI) and Ministry Survey gathered qualitative data. The data included how people felt about the ministry of the church, the effectiveness of NLCC's present programs, and the adequacy of the current organizational structures, staff, and facilities.

3. Where should we be?

This question became a reflection of the churches' potential, not their current reality. In

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ Ibid

light of God's purpose and design for NLCC, using assessment data, the researcher could zero in on what ministry should be doing to accomplish God's purpose and the resources that will be needed to do it. Resources included the right people, the right gifts, abilities, passions, experience, and maturity for the various ministries.

4. Where will we be if we keep going as we are now?

Here the researcher took an honest look at the health, and growth of the church, projecting ahead to what will happen if NLCC makes no significant change in the ministry. Faced with the forecast what must be done to meet health needs of NLCC.

4. Where will we go from here?

In the final stages of the project the writer drafted a proposal for the congregational leadership based on the findings. Goals were set to enable NLCC to better meet the needs, which surfaced through the assessment. An action plan was developed. Strategies to accomplish goals were implemented, time lines and benchmarks were identified for quality assurance.

Collection of Data

Questionnaires were used to collect the data. A sample of 32 respondents drawn from a population of over 200 church members was administered in a seven-part questionnaire. The sample size in the church was determined according to the size of the congregation's adult worship attendance when given on two consecutive Sundays. The respondents were selected from a random group. The purposive target comprised adults, over 18 years of age who have been attending the church for at least two years. Each question solicited the opinion of the respondent based on a 5-point Likert Agreement Scale; a scale of 1-5 (1 being Low and 5 being

High) measured respondents' agreement with a variety of statements on each of the seven domain tested.

Presentation of Data

Data were collected, collated and presented in 7 tables for the purpose of this project. The following are the rese

Table 1 shows the seven category areas that influence Church Health and Acceptability. These are Evangelism, Sunday School/Discipleship, Fellowship, Ministry/Missions, Leadership and Stewardship. The table 1 presents the sum of respective rating and averages. It also presents the Vital Signs derived from aggregation of ratings from each domain. The rationale was to classify each domain as a healthy, marginal, unhealthy or critical zone.

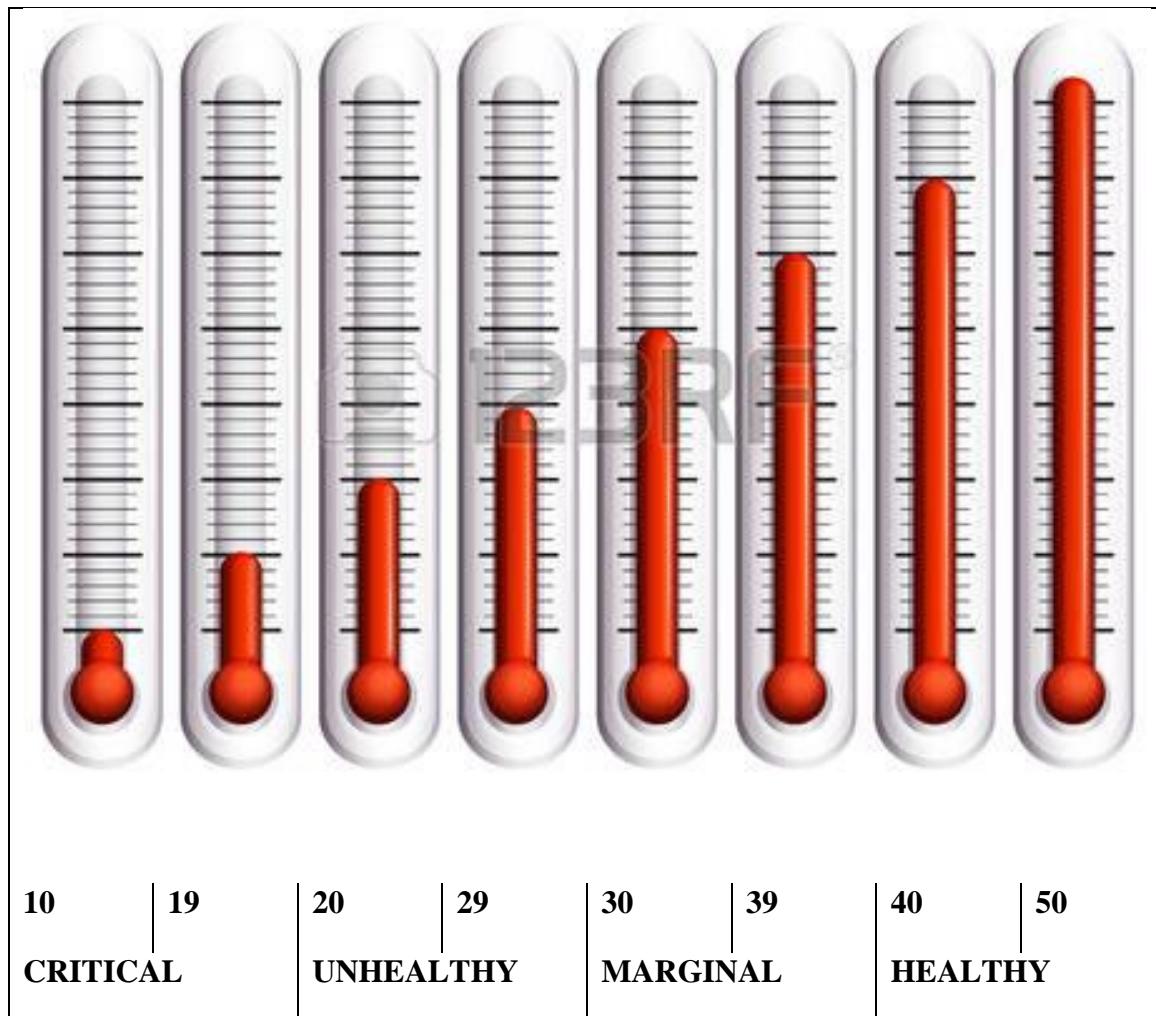
Church Health Inventory (CHI)

VITAL SIGN DATA TABLE & CHURCH INVENTORY ZONE (CHI)

Rating Scale of 1-5 (1 being Low and 5 being High)

Table 1.

CHI ZONES



This legend indicates how to interpret the health of each category in the survey questionnaire.

10 to 19 points: Emergency surgery needs to be done to save the patient

20 to 29 points: Resuscitation may be called for-STAT!

30 to 39 points: Several changes in church lifestyle will need to be made.

40 to 50 points: Overall good condition. Some minor corrections could be made.

Table 2.

DOMAIN	RATING SCALE ITEMS			CHI ZONE
	SUM	AVERAGE (rating scale)	VITAL SIGN	
1 Evangelism	1471	4.6	45.97	Healthy
2 Sunday School/Discipleship	1250	3.91	39.06	Marginal
3 Fellowship	1300	4.06	40.63	Healthy
4 Ministry/Missions	1454	4.54	45.44	Healthy
5 Worship	1273	3.98	39.78	Marginal
6 Leadership	1324	4.14	41.38	Healthy
7 Stewardship	1253	3.92	39.16	Marginal

Table 2. shows the rating scale of the CHI. The SUM total, the average of the respondents, the actual vital sign tallied number and the health category .

Table 3.

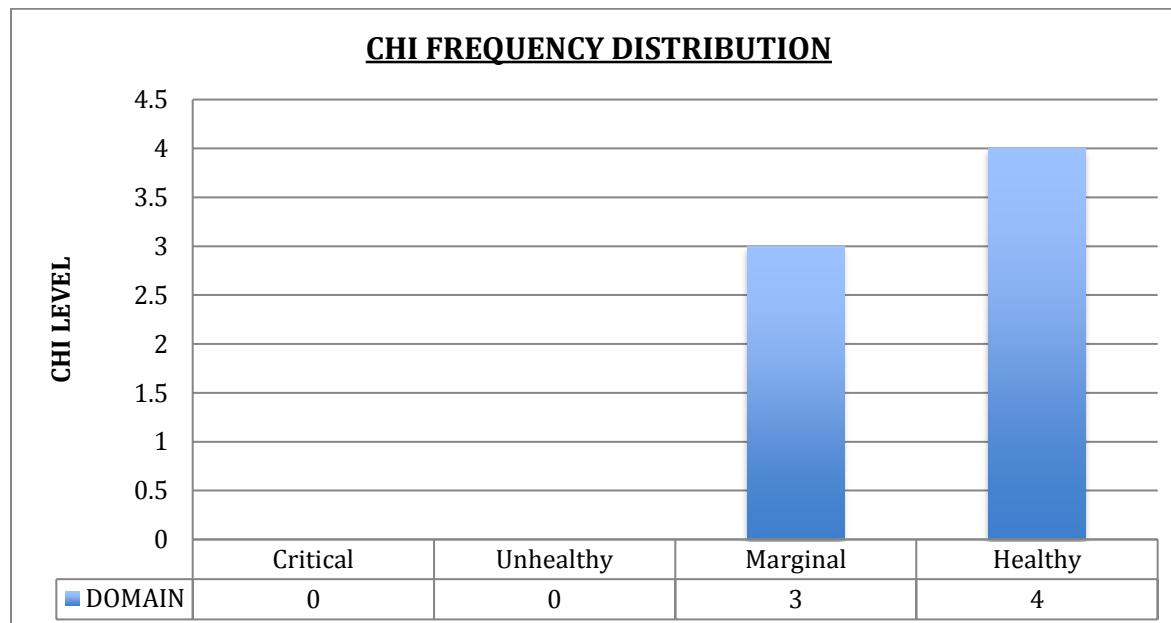


Table 3 shows the frequency level of each of the health categories. According to this chart NLCC's health is marginal to healthy. It is the desire of the researcher to use this data to help ministry improvement and drive planning of the church. The areas the church has identified as marginal are the areas that need the most immediate attention.

Table 4.

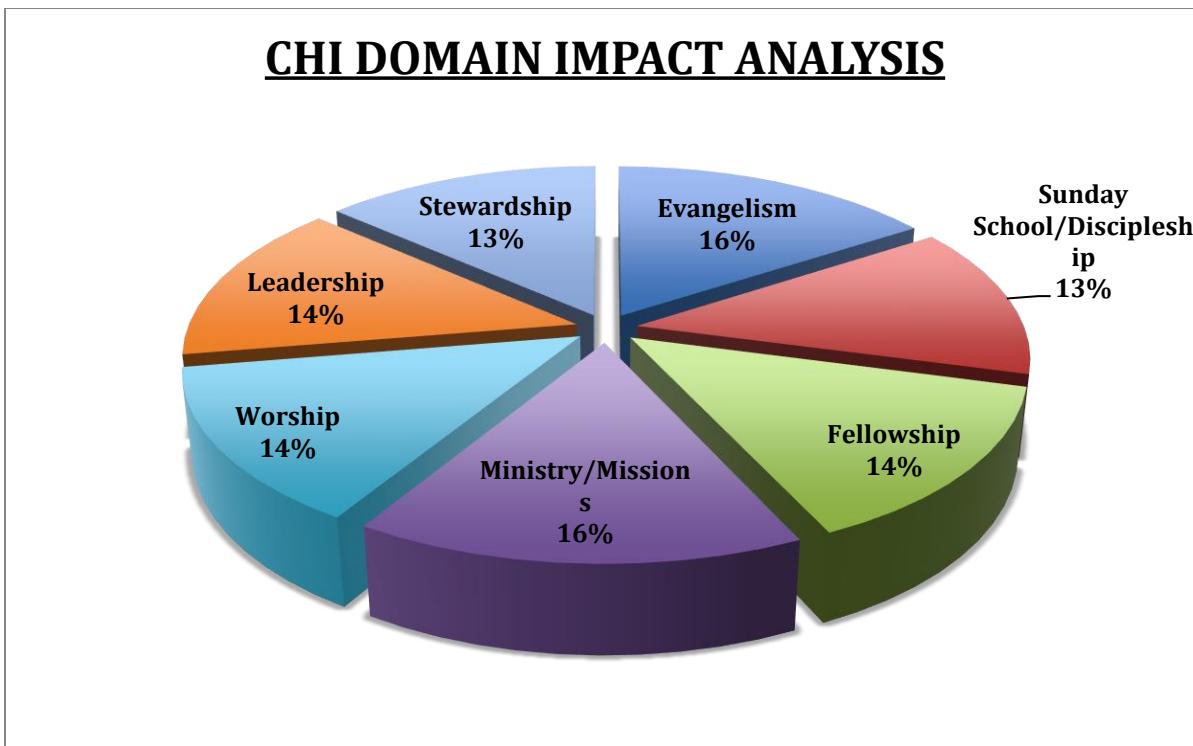


Table 4 is a Pie Chart that illustrates the impact of the ministry as it relates to the whole of the areas of ministry accessed.

Table 5.

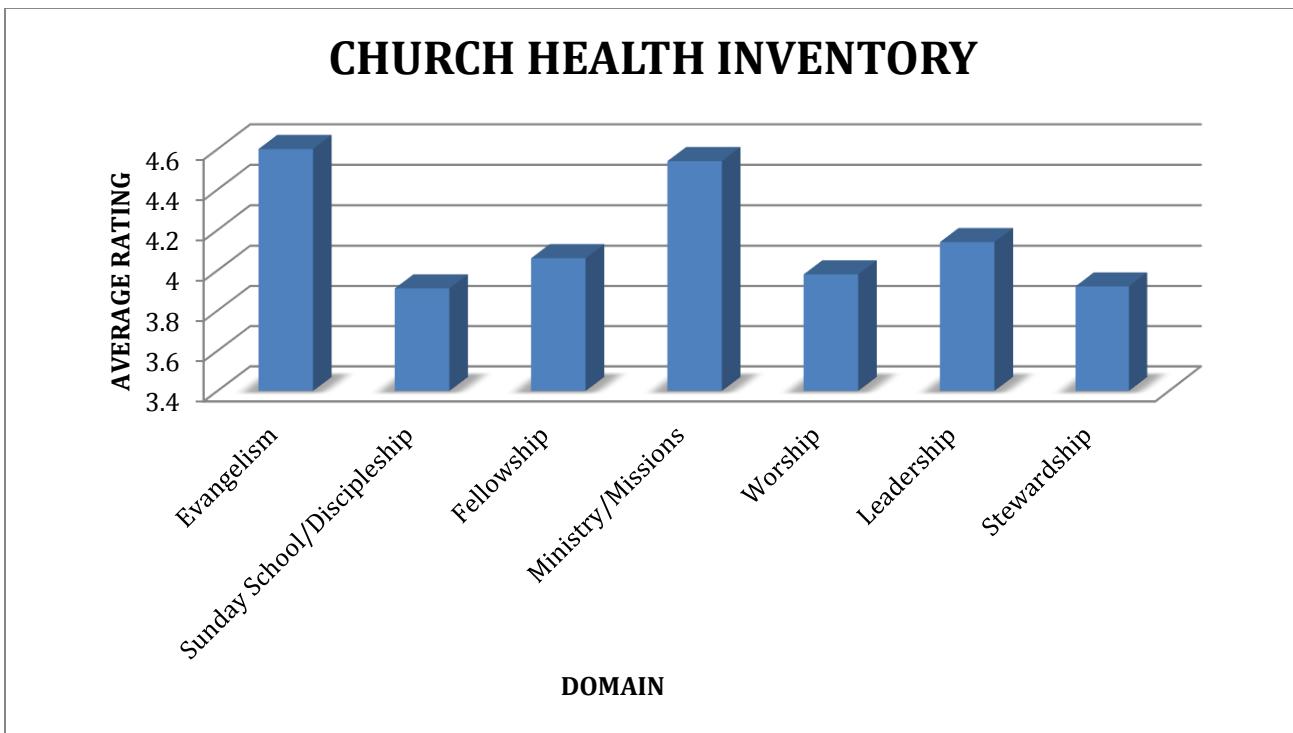
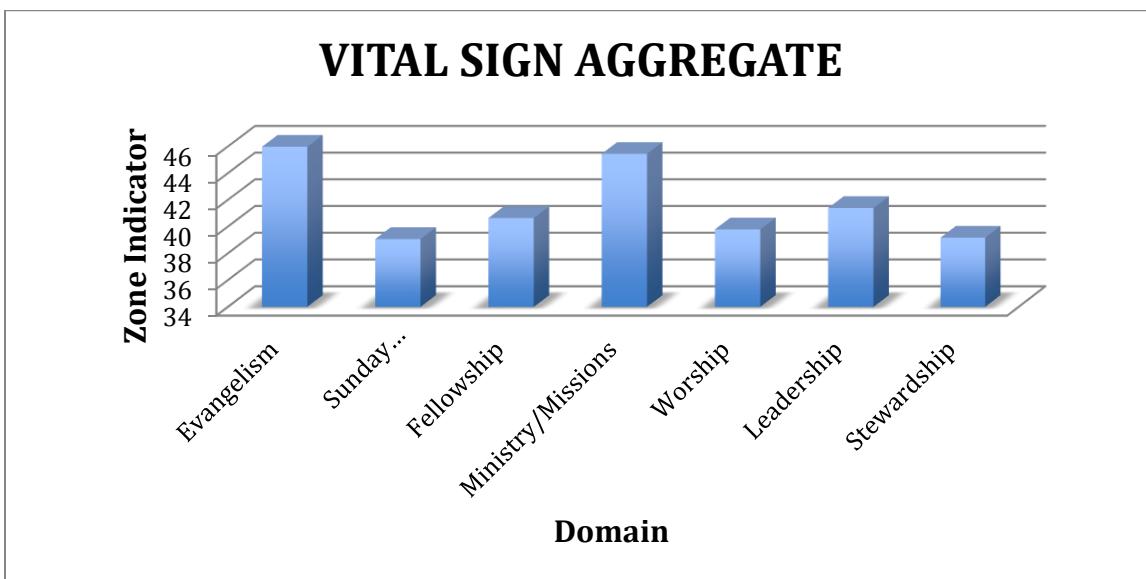


Table 5 explains the average rating of the

Table 6.



Growth-Health Correlation

The purpose of using correlation in this analysis is to determine how, and to what extent, strength, and direction, Church Growth is related to Church Health.

A correlation coefficient (r), defined as a numerical representation of the strength and direction of this relationship was calculated. Numerically, this is calculated using the relationship:

$$r = \frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2 \sum (y - \bar{y})^2}}$$

Where x bar and y bar are the sample means average for array1 and array 2, respectively.

To measure the joint effect of church health factors on the same group of respondents, vis-à-vis church growth, the following assumptions were made to compartmentalize Church Health and Church Growth variables:

- 1) Church Growth as a function of “Sunday School, Evangelism and Worship”
- 2) Church Health as a function of “Leadership, Mission and Stewardship”

The analysis is presented in Table 7 (Appendix). Data from thirty-two respondents on Church Growth and Church Health factors were presented and analyzed.

- The table gives two means of 43.125 and 43.375 for Church Growth and Church Health respectively.

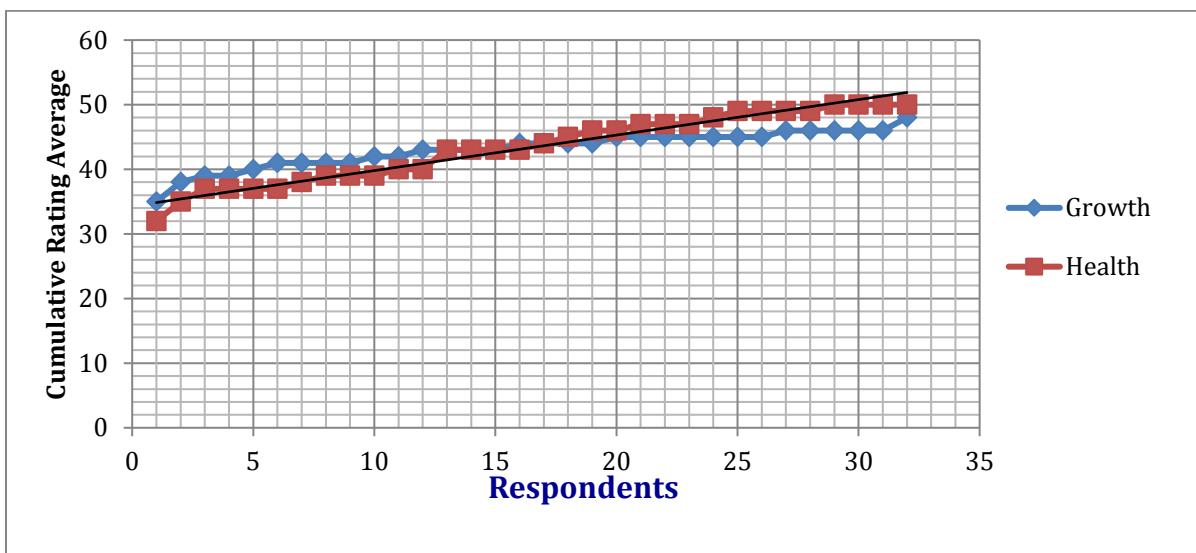
With the use of Microsoft Excel software, the correlation between Church Growth and Church Health was calculated using Pearson Statistics.

- This gives a correlation coefficient of: $r = 0.95786\dots$

This positive correlation of $r \approx 0.96$ indicate a highly significant relationship between the variables.

Also graphs & scatter plot was done with Excel, to depict the data. See "Chart" below:

Table 7



The correlation between Church Health and Church Growth is displayed variable shows a direct correlation between the two. Using the this data the writer will use the terms health and growth interchangeably.

(See Appendix 7)

CHAPTER 6: DATA OUTCOMES

Triage

The results of the data gave the researcher a base line of the health of NLCC, it has also given a correlation between health and growth. Based on the findings from the CHI, the writer focused on areas identified as marginal and create a correction action plan. The analysis of the data also showed that there were three areas that were deemed marginal. Based on the research tool the general consensus of the respondents was that the church is operating in the marginal to healthy categories. Furthermore, there were no areas that were deemed critical or unhealthy. Therefore, the researcher concentrated on those areas that came under the category of marginal. They are: Sunday-School, Stewardship, and Worship. According to the CHI the church's Evangelism, Fellowship, leadership, and Ministry/missions are healthy. These areas, although healthy, will need to be monitored and adjusted as needed.

The writer needed to see what the research said about these areas of concern? Based on the assessment outcomes a literature review was conducted on Sunday School, worship and stewardship in relation to church growth.

At this point research was done, surveys were taken, interviews of ministry leaders were conducted, reports and statistics were analyzed, and observations of the various ministries in action were completed. This initiated some honest soul-searching in the church. Every step of the process was enveloped in prayer and it was apparent that a corrective action plan be created to make the necessary changes to improve the overall health and growth of NLCC. It was necessary look at what the research said about the marginal areas of ministry in order to create an informed action plan. The following information would help to create the plan of action.

Sunday School

Is Sunday school important? In 1996 Ken Hemphill wrote, “Some church growth writers are predicting the demise of the Sunday School. They have labeled it a dinosaur, a relic of the past age. Some contend that the Sunday School was an important growth tool of the past, but it is facing extinction as the church enters the twenty-first century.”⁶⁹

In an article entitled “Rumors of Sunday School Death Greatly Exaggerated,” Phil Stone, State Sunday School Director for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, writes, “In the 90’s Sunday School was declared dead; out of touch with the culture; no longer a viable ministry; doesn’t work any more.”⁷⁰ However there is research that indicates that Sunday school is still one of the greatest evangelistic tools and methods of retaining members.

In his book, *High Expectations*, Thom Rainer quotes Don Cox, “Many church leaders have helped perpetuate the myth for twenty or so years. The myth is that Sunday School is no longer effective evangelistically or as an assimilation tool.”⁷¹

In a Study of 576 evangelical churches, it was found the Sunday School to be one of the most important factors in church growth.⁷² Ken Hemphill put forward nine reasons why the Sunday School is the growth tool of the future.

1. Sunday School provides a centralized and simplified strategy. It is much easier to

⁶⁹ 1Ken Hemphill, *Revitalizing the Sunday Morning Dinosaur*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996

⁷⁰ Phil Stone, *Rumors of Sunday School Death Greatly Exaggerated*, available from <http://www.bsnc.org/churchministries/sundayschool/sundayschoolalive.htm>; accessed 12 December 2006.

⁷¹ Thom Rainer, *High Expectations*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999, 29.

⁷² Ibib 65

find the leadership for a single organization that can fulfill the threefold task of outreach, assimilation, and teaching than staffing three or more different organizations. 2. Sunday School is familiar. Most people who have any church background or experience have been involved in a Sunday School program of some kind.

3. Sunday School is a solid foundation for innovation. Innovation is always built on the foundation of fundamental principles. Sunday School can provide that foundation for your church. A strong Sunday School is not a deterrent to innovation, it is the foundation for innovation.

4. Sunday School incorporates the six principles of church growth in one organization. When Sunday School has a clear purpose statement and is managed correctly, it incorporates those principles that most church growth authors agree to be fundamental-the Process Principle, the New Unit Principle, the Leadership Principle, the Homogeneity Principle, the Receptivity Principle, and the Pyramid Principle.

5. Sunday School is the natural companion to an exciting worship service. If you have discovered that people in your community are more likely to come first to a celebrative worship service, the Sunday school still provides the best method for assimilating these newcomers so that they become attached to the family. 6. Sunday School gets people involved in service. The Sunday school provides many opportunities for people with differing gifts to be involved in ministry.

7. Sunday School provides the small-group experience every Christian needs.

8. Sunday School is not tied to a single personality. A church built on the small group structure is founded on the solid rock of relationships, not on personalities or events.

9. Sunday School has a proven track record.⁷³

The problem with Sunday School today is not with the program itself, rather the problem is with the priority and the purpose that pastors and churches place on the Sunday School. Talmadge Johnson and Stan Toler agree, “The problem with non-evangelistic Sunday Schools is not the program itself; the problem is the failure to use the program as an intentional evangelistic tool.”⁷⁴

The Purpose of Sunday School -- A Brief History

Robert Raikes (1735-1811) is traditionally credited as pioneering Sunday Schools in the 1780s in England. These Sunday Schools were developed for the purpose of educating poor and orphaned children on Sundays, their one day off from factory work. The purpose of Raikes' Sunday School was to clean up, feed, and educate those children who could not attend school. Raikes began his first Sunday school in 1780 in the kitchen of a private home in the slums of Gloucester. The first students were very poor, uneducated children who spent six days a week working in deplorable conditions. Raikes' school then continued through the afternoon. A healthy dose of biblical instruction was given along with instruction in reading and writing. The goal was to change the inner character of these children and as a result, to make a positive impact

⁷³ Ken Hemphill, Revitalizing the Sunday Morning Dinosaur pp.27-30 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996)

⁷⁴ Talmadge Johnson and Stan Toler, *Rediscovering the Sunday School* .Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2000

on society. Within thirty years, the Sunday school in England spread to involve 400,000 students.⁷⁵

John Wesley, evangelist and the founder of the Methodist movement, was one of the earliest proponents of Sunday School. Wesley stated, “I verily think these Sunday Schools are the noblest institutions which have been seen in Europe for some centuries, and will increase more and more. . . . It will be one of the great means of reviving religious thought throughout the nation.”⁷⁶

The value of the Sunday school as a key to reaching the lost for Jesus Christ and church membership was recognized by early Baptist leaders. In 1902 Dr. E.Y. Mullins wrote, “Already in many churches the Sunday School is the chief and almost only hope for church growth. But whether in the family church, or the church among the masses of the great city, or the country church, the Sunday School will remain the most hopeful field of evangelistic endeavor.”⁷⁷

Sunday School is one of the best methods of providing this holistic approach to evangelism. Education and evangelism have been linked ever since Jesus charged the twelve to go make disciples, baptize them, and “[teach] them to obey everything I have commanded you . . .” (Matt. 28:19-20, italics mine). Go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. The text probably does not mean that things should always be done in that order, but it does suggest that, in relation to the proclamation of the gospel—or we could say evangelism—making disciples, baptizing, and

⁷⁵ Wes Haystead. *The 21st Century Sunday School: Strategies for Today and Tomorrow* Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 1995, 12-13.

⁷⁶ Bill Taylor. *21 Truths, Traditions, and Trends*. Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1996, 29.

⁷⁷ J.N. Barnette, *A Church Using its Sunday School* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1937, revised 1951

teaching are closely connected. To say that evangelism and teaching or education is connected, however, is not to say that they are the same thing.

Both words—evangelism and education—suggest a variety of meanings. One source reports that there have been over three hundred definitions of the concept “evangelize” offered in print. Evangelism often conjures up images of street-corner preachers, altar calls, or even knocking on doors to invite people to church. These forms of evangelism make many people uncomfortable. But, there is another, more holistic way to think about the matter. The authors of the book *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution* argue that evangelizing is central to the heart of the church’s life and ministry. It occurs through the spoken Word, through the sacraments, and in the life of the Christian community. It is making the gospel known in both the church and the world. And rather than being the task of the clergy alone, evangelizing is integral to the baptismal vocation of all Christians. These authors prefer the word “evangelizing” to “evangelism,” because the meaning of the latter is too often limited to matters of program and method—for example, knocking on doors as a congregation’s sole concept of evangelism. Evangelizing, in this sense, lies at the heart of what the church is.⁷⁸

Worship:

To the writers dismay the data collected indicated that Worship at NLCC is at the marginal level. The worship service is the front door of the church, however Thom Rainer in studying hundreds of Evangelical churches in America states that it can also close the back door. The “Front Door” refers to new members or gains in attendance; the “Back Door” typically

⁷⁸ Richard H. Bliese, Craig Van Gelder. *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Books, Fortress Publishing. 2005

means loss of membership or decrease in attendance. He states that two important elements of worship are: Expository Preaching that equips Christians for ministry and service. The facet of the worship service is the teaching and equipping time for the church members.

Second, the pastor and other leaders use worship time to communicate High Expectations to the congregation.⁷⁹

Dynamic Worship:

Heartfelt, Spirit-filled worship is the catalyst for growth because it ushers people into a deeper experience of God's presence. Dynamic Worship is more a matter of the spirit of the people than it is the style of the service. With the right spirit any worship style, contemporary, traditional, or blended can bring the congregation into a dynamic, genuine worship experience. In the "emerging worship" trend, many churches have begun to recover and incorporate ancient worship elements, such as creeds, prayers, and classic confessions of faith, into contemporary worship settings; blending liturgical, charismatic, and Pentecostal elements together has birthed a powerful and eclectic worship style.⁸⁰

Leading Worship

During the final decades of the twentieth century, North American churches were engaged in what was commonly known as the "worship wars." It was largely a series of disagreements over worship styles or idioms. Because the most readily identifiable stylistic aspect of worship is the type of music being employed, the worship wars seemed to be largely

⁷⁹ Rainer, Thom, *High Expectations*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999, 29.

⁸⁰ Donald Hilliard. *Church Growth from an African American Perspective*, Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006

about what kind of music a church used. In churches that leaned toward “contemporary worship” styles, the term “worship” came to be singularly identified with corporate songs (or choruses) of praise. A contemporary worship service might have a twenty or thirty minute song set termed “worship,” followed by a reading from Scripture and a sermon. Accordingly, the “worship leader” was the person who led congregational singing from a microphone. He or she was frequently a guitarist or keyboardist who had the skills to lead a worship band and to lead the people from one song to another in a stylistic flow.

In recent years, the worship wars seem to have subsided and churches of various liturgical perspectives are seeking to learn from one another. Liturgically traditional churches are incorporating new music from “praise” oriented churches, congregations from “free church” traditions are adding more liturgical elements (such as more frequent celebration of communion) to their weekly gatherings, all are seeking

Stewardship:

The word, stewardship, simply means to manage someone else's property. For the Christian, as Scripture proclaims everything belongs to God, we manage the property of our Lord. Since everything belongs to Christ, we need to have the attitude and view that our things are His things, our stuff is His stuff, that all we could have now, all we have lost, all we will have, is His, including our very bodies and spiritual gifts. We are mere lessees of the property, money, relationships, talents, time, and even our lives. That means all that we are and all that we have are not really ours to begin with. They belong to God. So, the duty of the Christian is to learn how to become responsible stewards of our Lord's resources entrusted into our care. It means to manage everything to the best of our abilities for His glory (1 Cor. 4:2).

CHAPTER 7: ACTION PLAN

The next task was to create an action plan for the areas deemed marginally healthy; they were Sunday school, Stewardship and Worship. A simple tool used in education, a Corrective Action Plan (CAP), was invaluable in helping create a plan for improvement for NLCC. The principles of the CAP will ensure that NLCC is meeting their initial vision and mission. Using these principles for improvement, NLCC called the action plan a Ministry Action Plan (MAP)

I had an opportunity to review a corrective action plan that was developed collaboratively with the Business Office of a Board of Education and the Auditors. Items were identified and a plan for improvement was developed. All corrective actions had to be approved by the Board. I have included a sample of two of the eleven items. All actions had to be implemented during the upcoming school year.

Issue	Corrective Action	Implementation	Person Responsible	Plan Begin/End Dates
Travel Expenses and Reimbursements	The board must ensure expense limits, separate travel account lines must be established	The Business Office must create travel account codes to accommodate Board Policy	Accounts Payable Dept. Admin. Confidential Secretary Accountants Controller	
Liquidate obligations incurred during	The grant period ended and funds were	The controller and the account assigned to the	Accountant Controller	

the grant period of 90 days	not liquidated in accordance with the grant	grant has to ensure that the grant is executed and payment is made to the vendor within 90 days		
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The chart above illustrates the process that the district follows in order to improve accounting practices and procedures. 8 areas are evaluated during the audit process.

I believe that audits are done on an annual basis. The areas of review are as follows:

- Administrative Practices and Procedures
- Financial Planning, Reporting and Accounting
- School Purchasing Program
- School Services Fund
- Student Body Activity
- Application for State School Aid Facilities
- Transportation
- Facilities and Capital Assets

In order to maintain strengths the BA would have to continue to follow the recommendations of auditors to continuously strengthen practices. Additionally, he would have to continue to provide strong leadership as well as openly communicate and collaborate with his staff.

The researcher used this model to create a Ministry Action Plan (MAP) for the NLCC. Those that participated in working on the MAP were eager and excited. A renewed sense of enthusiasm was felt by the leadership of the church as a result of creating this plan of action.

The areas of review are as follows:

- Sunday-School
- Stewardship
- Worship

Why a MAP?

*“Then the Lord answered me and said, “Write a vision, and make it plain upon a tablet so that a runner can read it. There is still a vision for the appointed time; it testifies to the end; it does not deceive. If it delays, wait for it; for it is surely coming; it will not be late. Some people’s desires are truly audacious; they don’t do the right thing. But the righteous person will live honestly. ”*⁸¹

NLCC Ministry Action Plan (MAP)

Issue	Ministry Action Plan (MAP)	Implementation	Person Responsible	Plan Begin/End Dates
Sunday-School	Recruit people to serve in the Christian Education	Create SMART Goals for the ministry. Ministry will	Deaconess Anesa Grissom. Superintendent of Sunday	11/17-11/18

⁸¹ (Habakkuk 2:2-4)NRSV

	<p>Ministry.</p> <p>Designate teachers to classes they are comfortable teaching.</p> <p>Easter Sunday: Sunday School Kick Off.</p> <p>Abbreviated Sunday School Lesson during Worship.</p> <p>Provide breakfast for Sunday school ministry</p>	<p>UMI Annual Sunday School Curriculum</p> <p>Teachers will be assigned to classes and given the materials and training for instruction</p> <p>Easter Sunday time in the service to introduce Sunday School Ministry</p> <p>Each Ministry will rotate and prove breakfast i.e, Deacons, Trustees</p>	<p>School</p> <p>Deaconess Anesa Grissom</p> <p>Sunday School</p> <p>Teachers, Worship Leader, Pastor</p> <p>Ministry Teams</p>	<p>2/18-11/18</p> <p>4/1/18-11/18</p>
Stewardship	<p>Teaching on Stewardship.</p> <p>Nontraditional teaching (i.e. videos, guest</p>	<p>Create SMART Goals for the ministry.</p> <p>Workshops and Resources:</p> <p>Money management, balancing books,</p>	<p>Trustee</p> <p>Ministry, Treasurer</p> <p>Officers, Deaconess</p> <p>Nicole Burns,</p>	11/17-11/18

	<p>presenters.)</p> <p>Modeling behaviors</p> <p>Setting up alternative methods of giving, PayPal, Direct deposit, Zelle</p>	<p>budgeting, final expenses, life insurance</p>	<p>Trustee Kevin Clark</p>	
Worship	<p>Start and finish on time.</p> <p>Create a Worship Team that will plan and lead service.</p> <p>Printed Order of Service.</p> <p>Music must be congruent with preaching and flow of service</p>	<p>Create SMART Goals for the ministry.</p> <p>Create Dynamic Worship Experience</p> <p>Worship Leader follows order of service. Give people advance notice when on program</p> <p>Seeking for Skilled Musician</p>	<p>Pastor</p> <p>Choir Director</p> <p>Worship team, Pastor, Choir Director, Worship Leader</p> <p>Musicians</p>	<p>11/17-11/18</p> <p>2/15/18-11/15/18</p> <p>11/17-11/18</p> <p>Immediately</p>

The Ministry Action Plan (MAP) became a discernment tool that allowed NLCC to discover where they are and make intentional, prayer-directed decisions about where they are called to go. The MAP was created during a workshop where the leadership team of the church looked at the marginal areas identified by the assessment outcomes. The MAP template was explained and blank copies were passed out to the leaders. During the workshop, Sunday school, stewardship and worship were discussed. Information was presented based on research, biblical application and what it means to NLCC. It became a valuable tool that was both spiritual and practical. It was spiritual because it was not just a document that was produced in a void or a business tool. The MAP was prayerfully considered, and created in conversation with God. It was practical because it laid out objectives, goals, and plans in a way that helped order daily ministry life.⁸²

By creating the MAP, people were assigned to serve, start/end dates were established, and the resources needed were specified. Next the ministries would need to create SMART GOALS. (This was done at the next workshop).

Creating SMART Goals for the ministry.

SMART goals help improve achievement and success. A SMART goal clarifies exactly what is expected and the measures used to determine if the goal is achieved and successfully completed.

A SMART goal is:

Specific (and strategic): Linked to a particular ministry area with a person responsible for leading

⁸² Marty J. Cauley. *Effective Ministry Action Plans Your MAP Out of the Wilderness of Ministry* <https://nccumc.org/newfaithcommunities/files/Effective-Ministry-Action-Plans> Copyright ©2014

their team to reach the goal. Answers the question—Who? and What?

Measurable: The success toward meeting the goal can be measured. Answers the question—How?

Attainable: Goals are realistic and can be achieved in a specific amount of time and are reasonable. Answers the question—Is it reasonable?

Relevant (results oriented): The goals are aligned with current tasks and projects and focus in one defined area; include the expected result. Answers the question—What is the expected result?

Time Sensitive: Goals have a clearly defined time-frame including a target or deadline date. Answers the question—When is it to be completed?

Examples:

Not a SMART goal: We will be a friendly church.

- *Does not identify a measurement or time frame, nor identify why the improvement is needed or how it will be used.*

SMART goal: The Welcome Team will create a method to track and record member and guest attendance that includes a system to follow up with those who are absent and first time guests by May 10, 2018.

The MAP assisted in creating “SMART goals, to do lists, weekly and monthly schedules, and helped to determine strategic starting points and milestones to keep the church on track. The creation of goals provided a framework for creating a timeline. Since all goals, if effective, have time specific milestones tied to them, the timeline almost created itself. Providing a timeline

showed where NLCC was in the process and what the anticipated next steps will be. It also becomes a self-regulating matrix.

It became a guide that provided the language and guidelines for each level of communication. The MAP helped to communicate the vision passionately, clearly, and have real ways to invite others to join in the ministry.

The MAP provided goals and benchmarks for progress. It allowed the leaders to best decide where they think NLCC should be 2 to 3 years from now, and then work backward to establish annual goals, then quarterly goals, then monthly goals, then weekly goals. The discipline of goal-setting and strategizing demonstrates willingness to be held accountable for your actions. It also allows you to determine your own measurement and assessment matrix.

Into Practice:

Much of the MAP has been implemented to date. It is a dynamic document, it is meant to change, flex, and grow as ministry takes shape. It has allowed the researcher to juxtapose the Vision and Mission based on assessment outcomes.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

It has been this writer's pleasure and privilege to be able to assess something that was started 17 years ago and has stood the test of time.

This project assessed and evaluated NLCC's current mission and vision. Further, the project examined the health, growth and relevance of NLCC in the 21st century. To summarize, the writer completed an assessment of NLCC ministries. Current stakeholders participated in a constructive survey that measured the health and growth of identified ministries of the church. The writer was able to juxtapose the vision and mission of NLCC based on assessment outcomes.

When starting this work 17 years ago the writer had no idea of the challenges, the joys, and pains ministry would bring. To see dreams accomplished and goals brought to fruition is a blessing. When the vision and mission were analyzed against a set of data that measured a portion of the health of NLCC, the findings were that the vision and mission are being met and the areas that were deemed marginal are now being addressed through a Ministry Action Plan. This project served as a means of uniting a congregation and renewing their call to action, and for that the writer is grateful. In one sense the project has ignited a revival, where people have new enthusiasm and interest to serve.

Although this project was not an exhausted study on church health and growth it has been an invaluable tool for further research that will assist the success of the ministry. This project has started a conversation in the church that will continue, it is a conversation concerning continued assessments, and ministerial improvement. The leadership team of NLCC will continue to take

the pulse and check the health of the church and it's ministries. The writer was able to reconcile and get a deeper appreciation for small churches and the value they have.

NLCC and all churches has room for improvement, but improvement cannot be made if the church puts it's head in the sand and does not assess and consider the needs and opinions of the congregation. The qualitative assessment tool and surveys informed the leadership of how people felt, and how best to serve their needs.

Jesus said, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."⁸³

⁸³ (Matt 16:18)NRSV

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APPENDENCES

APPENDIX



New Life Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Serving God and the Community

12 Prospect Street
Bloomfield NJ 07003
Phone: (973) 566-0810
Fax: (973) 566-0810
Email: newlifedoc@aol.com

OCTOBER 18, 2018

Leadership Meeting

AGENDA

I. Prayer

II. Early Symptoms of Sickness

III. Wednesday Fast and Prayer

6:00am, 12pm, 6:00pm

IV. Reassessing Vision & Mission

Rev. Stephen Webb, Pastor

APPENDIX

Summary Paper

Autopsy of a Deceased Church

Thom Rainer

October 18, 2017

Perspective:

Healthy Churches:	10%
Symptoms of Sickness:	40%
Very Sick:	40%
Dying:	10%

Early Symptoms of Sickness:

- Ministries and programs are shifting towards those inside the church rather than those outside the church.
- Some people may be added each year, but no sense of true disciple making taking place.
- No clear plan for making disciples and disciple makers.
- Lots of programs and ministry clutter but many contribute little or nothing to making of disciples.
- Lots of busyness and activities but much of it has no sense of a real purpose.

Prayer: God, open my eyes that I might see my church as You see it. Let me see where change needs to take place, even if it is painful to me. And use me, I pray, to be an instrument of that change whatever the cost.

Ten Factors Leading to Death

1. **Slow Erosion.** Some in facilities, some in ministries that once had impact, but mostly in the prayer life of those in the church.

Prayer: God, please let me be part of the solution and not the problem. Show me what I need to see. Open my eyes to Your reality. And give me courage to move forward in the directions You desire.

2. **The Past is the Hero.** There are several points in decline where the church can turn around, but the key influencers refuse to listen. They are blind to the reality of the declining church. Areas we cling to: worship styles, facilities, pastors of the past, our own needs rather than the needs of those without Christ, the way we have always done things so we are comfortable.

Prayer: God, give me the conviction and the courage to be like the heroes of Hebrews 11. Teach me not to hold onto those things in my church that are my personal preferences and styles. Show me not only how to let go, but where to let go, so that I may heed Your commands more closely.

3. **Refusing to Look Like the Community.** Losing the children and grandchildren of those in the church, when the church does reach out, they ask the community to come to them rather than the church going to the community, the church becomes a fortress, keeping people and possessions on the inside safe while keeping people on the other side out. Church stops reaching and caring for the community.

Prayer: God, give my church and me a heart for our community. Let me see people through Your eyes. And give me the courage and the wisdom to let go of this church, so that others who best reflect this community can lead us and teach us.

4. **The Budget Moves Inwardly.** Pastor and staff are expected to mostly care for those already in the church. In dying churches, the last expenditures to be cut are those that keep the church people comfortable. First cuts are to ministries and programs with an outward focus. The basic pattern is funding to keep the machinery of the church moving

and members happy rather than funding for the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

Prayer: Lord, help me grasp that all the money I think I have is really Yours. Help me to grasp that all the money our church has is not the church's, but Yours. Give us healthy giving hearts to use these funds according to Your purpose.

5. **The Great Commission Becomes the Great Omission.** The methods we use for reaching out become the focus rather than the Great Commission itself. The church decides not to act on the Great Commission commandment to make disciples by their actions. The church stops going, stops making disciples, stops baptizing, stops teaching people to obey. Chilling quote from book:

"Members had a convenient omission in their recollections. They wanted the same results as yesteryear, but they weren't willing to expend the efforts...members of the dying church weren't willing to go into the community to reach and minister to people...they just wanted it to happen. Without prayer. Without sacrifice. Without hard work. Members of the dying churches really didn't want growth unless that growth met their preferences and allowed them to remain comfortable."

Prayer: Lord, remind me that I am to be a Great Commission Christian in a Great Commission church. Remind me that, in Your strength, I am to do whatever it takes to reach out into my community with the transforming power of the gospel.

6. **Preference-Driven Church.** Attitude is self-serving, self-giving, self-entitled. A church by definition is a body of believers who function for the greater good of the congregation. When church members increasingly demand their own preferences, the church is steadily not becoming the church. The church dies because its members refuse to be the church.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes to the needs of others. Show me how to live more like Your Son, who always put others' interests first. And especially show me that attitude as I serve in my church.

7. **Pastoral Tenure Decreases.** The pastor comes to the church and leads in a few changes. The members don't like the changes and resist. The pastor becomes discouraged and leaves. The cycle repeats.

Prayer: Please give our pastor a heart and a vision to reach and minister to people beyond our walls. Teach me to be the kind of church member who encourages and supports our pastor, so discouragement and disillusionment does not lead to departure.

8. **The Church Rarely Prays Together.** Prayer becomes routine and ritual. “Prayer meetings” are not really times of prayer. Prayer and the health of the church go hand in hand. Failure to pray is tantamount to a failure to breathe. Prayer is the lifeblood of the church. Chilling quote from book:

“We stopped praying with the passion we once had. That’s it. That was the beginning of the decline that led to our death.”

Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray. Teach me to pray consistently. Teach me to be a leader in prayer in my church. And teach me to keep passionate and believing prayer as the lifeblood of this church.

9. **Church Has No Clear Purpose.** Routines, traditions and rituals replaced the original purpose of being a gospel-driven, disciple-making people. Quotes from past members of dead churches:

- ⌚ “We were going through the motions.
- ⌚ Everything we did seemed to be like we were in a rut or bad routine.
- ⌚ We became more attached to our ways of doing church than we did asking the Lord what He wanted us to do.
- ⌚ We were playing a game called church. We had no idea what we were really supposed to be doing.
- ⌚ We stopped asking what we should be doing for fear that it would require too much effort or change.”

Prayer: God, reignite the hearts of our church members, including me, to have a passion for the gospel. Teach our church to share the gospel with others. Teach us to live as men and women who are true bearers of the good news of Jesus Christ. Remind us of our purpose. Convict us of our purpose. Empower us to live our purpose.

10. **Church Obsesses Over Facilities.** Memorials, pulpits, rooms, etc become more important than the Great Commission. Severe battles emerge over windows, pews, paint color, carpet, etc. Business meetings bring back those who have left the church to deal with the threat of change, then these people leave again.

Prayer: Lord, teach me the proper stewardship of all the material items You give me personally and in my church. Help me never let that stewardship evolve into obsession and idolatry, especially where I lose my perspective on what really matters

APPENDIX _____

Ministry Evaluation

You are being asked to complete this evaluation as part of the doctoral study of Stephen M. Webb, doctoral student at New York Theological Seminary. In completing this evaluation, you are assisting him in understanding the identified ministries at New Life Christian Church. Participation in this survey is voluntary. You are not required to participate in this survey and there is no compensation offered for doing so. You can stop participation in this survey at any time.

It is because of your leadership role in our church's ministry here at New Life Christian Church (DOC) you have been selected. In completing this evaluation, we are trying to objectively assess how each ministry fits in with the broader Mission and Vision of our church and if we are doing a good job of supporting this ministry so it can successfully serve others. This is an evaluation of the *ministry*, not of *you*, although as leader of the ministry it is your insights about the ministry that will be helpful for us.

We know you already invest your time into the overall ministry at New Life Christian Church (DOC), but we will consider it an extra blessing for us if you can take some time to provide specific and honest feedback. If you don't have an answer for every question, that's OK; please simply respond to what you can. We also want you to know that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. The best answers are those where you can provide objective and honest feedback to help New Life Christian Church (DOC) in future ministry.

If, after completing this survey, you have additional questions or thoughts to share, please feel free to contact Rev. Stephen M. Webb.

If, after completing this evaluation, you have additional questions or thoughts to share, please feel free to contact Pastor Stephen Webb or the church office.

Name: _____

Ministry: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form in the enclosed envelope to the church office by _____.

MINISTRY PURPOSE

1. What do you think is the primary purpose of this ministry?

(The concept of “purpose” can be somewhat general; if an answer does not immediately come to mind, please think about the following three questions about this ministry:)

WHO does this ministry serve?

WHAT NEED does this ministry meet?

WHY does this ministry exist?

2. Regarding the people that this ministry intends to serve, do you, as leader of the ministry, feel that they respond well to the ministry?

Yes No

If “No”, why do you think this is?

3. Among those persons that this ministry is intended to serve, how would you rate the participation level? *(That is, of all people who might benefit from this ministry, how many participate?)*

- High participation (75% or more)
- Good participation (50-75%)
- Low participation (25-50%)
- Poor participation (less than 25%)

MISSION AND VISION

As a church, we have adopted a Mission and Vision to guide our church. These questions are about how this ministry relates to the overall Mission and Vision of New Life Christian Church (DOC).

MISSION (“What We Are About”)

- *New Life Christian Church is a community of faith reaching the hearts, soul, and mind of all people. We provide an atmosphere of worship that is life changing: a ministry that is compassionate, SUPPORTIVE and Empowering of all people, through education and teaching of biblical truths. We are called to serve God and the community in a number of diverse, but deeply connect ways as we follow Christ.*

1. Do you feel this ministry's work is aligned with the **Mission** of New Life Christian Church (DOC) ? Yes No

VISION (“Where We Are Going”)

- *We are called to serve the Lord and the community in a number of diverse, but deeply connected ways: through prayer and worship, teaching, proclamation, service and outreach.*

2. Do you feel this ministry's work is aligned with the **Vision** of New Life Christian Church (DOC)?
 Yes No

3. What part of the Church's Mission *and/or* Vision do you feel that this ministry best fulfills?

4. What part of the Church's Mission *and/or* Vision would you, personally, like to see increase in this ministry?

5. Would you characterize the current impact of this ministry as being primarily **internally focused** (serving the needs of our members and attenders) or **externally focused** (serving those outside our church)?
 Internal Focus External Focus

MINISTRY SNAPSHOT

1. What do you think are the 1 or 2 things this ministry does best? These are the things that you think are serving the church well, and should definitely be continued.
 -
 -
2. Is there anything that this ministry currently does that you feel is no longer benefitting the church and should perhaps be discontinued?
3. Do you have any concerns about the ministry? This would be things you think may be detrimental to the ministry or the church in the future if they are not changed?
4. As leader of this ministry, what ideas do you have for how this ministry could grow?
(Another way to ask this question is: Are there things that the ministry is not doing, that you think it should do.)
5. What would the ministry, or you as its leader, need to effect growth for this ministry?

RESOURCES

1. Is the ministry's annual budget adequate to meet the current operational needs of the ministry? (If you do not know the ministry's budgeted amount, please ask Trustee Clark.)
 Yes No

If "No", what needs are not being met?

2. Does the ministry have enough volunteer support to keep things running smoothly?
 Yes No

If "No", please describe the impact this has on the ministry.

3. Do you feel that the Church does a good job of appreciating the volunteers in this ministry?

Yes No

If "No", what would you suggest as ways we can better show our appreciation?

If "Yes", what are the things that are appreciated?

4. Does the ministry receive support & encouragement:

- a. ...from the Pastor (*if applicable*)

Yes No

- b. ...from other church staff (pastor, office administrator, other paid church staff)?

Yes No

- c. ...from the church council?

Yes No

If you answered "No" for any of these, how can the Church staff and leaders better support and encourage this ministry and/or you as its leader?

YOUR ROLE AS LEADER

1. Do you, as leader of this ministry, feel well-equipped to serve in your role?

Yes No

If “No”, how can the church better equip you to lead and/or serve?

If “Yes”, what has been most helpful?

2. What are the two biggest challenges you face as you lead in ministry?

•

•

3. OTHER FEEDBACK

Is there any other feedback you would like to share about this ministry, or your experiences serving as leader of this ministry?

1/9/2018 FW: permission to use assessment tool

[Reply](#) [Reply All](#) [Forward](#)

FW: permission to use assessment tool

Stephen Webb

To: Stephen Webb 74 Halsted Street, East Orange, 07018

Main Office: (973) 266.5640

Tuesday, January 09, 2018 10:12 PM **All Labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.**
MLK

From: Gary Mathes [gmathes@mobaptist.org] **Sent:** Wednesday, December 13, 2017 12:27 PM **To:** Stephen Webb **Subject:** FW: permission to use assessment tool

Stephen, Thanks for your email. I am happy to grant permission for you to use the Show Me Vital Signs Church Health Assessment Tool. I pray it will be a blessing for you and the churches you assist. Blessings,

Dr. Gary Mathes, Church Revitalization Developing Leaders o: 573.636.0400 x338 c: 816.262.4503

w: mobaptist.org

From: Stacy Seaton <sseaton@mobapst.org> **Date:** Tuesday, December 12, 2017 at 10:15 AM **To:** Gary Mathes <gmathes@mobapst.org> **Subject:** FW: permission to use assessment tool

Stacy Seaton, Ministry Assistant Developing Leaders o: 573.636.0400 x336 w: mobaptist.org

From: Stephen Webb [<mailto:stephen.webb@eastorange.k12.nj.us>] **Sent:** Tuesday, December 12, 2017 10:04 AM **To:** Stacy Seaton <sseaton@mobapst.org> **Subject:** permission to use assessment tool

Good Morning Ms. Seaton, It was a pleasure speaking with you concerning the use of the Vital Signs of a Healthy Church Survey. This email is requesting permission to use this survey created by the Missouri Baptist Convention for Doctoral research on church growth. Thank you for your attention.

Kindest Regards,

Stephen Webb



<https://webmail.eastorange.k12.nj.us/owa/?ae=Item&t=IPM.Note&id=RgAAAAADgzWjG8RUvRb2tZfPnt%2bmfBwAck1Qqdr%2bdRJ%2bUVXyGHpyHAAAAibP...> 1/1

APPENDIX

Survey Protocol

You are being asked to complete this survey as part of the doctoral study of Stephen M. Webb, doctoral student at New York Theological Seminary. In completing this survey, you are assisting him in understanding the identified ministries at New Life Christian Church. Participation in this survey is **voluntary** and **anonymous**. You are not required to participate in this survey and there is no compensation offered for doing so. You can stop participation in this survey at any time.

If, after completing this survey, you have additional questions or thoughts to share, please feel free to contact Rev. Stephen M. Webb.

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS SURVEY!

Sunday School Discipleship Checkup

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low; 5 being high), how would you rate your church in Bible study and discipleship? Please use whole numbers (e.g. 1, 2, 3 NOT 1.5, 2.5, 3.5)

	Pastor regularly emphasizes the importance of Sunday School/small groups and Discipleship from the pulpit.
	Sunday School/Small group and Discipleship leaders are enlisted early based on their spiritual gifts and are given appropriate training.
	Sunday School leaders regularly attend planned workers meeting.
	A new members class or group is made available.
	Appropriate Bible study/Discipleship curriculum materials are provided for each age group.
	Church leadership has a clear Discipleship plan to help all believers mature in Christ.
	Sunday School classes enroll new members regularly and are recognized for doing so.
	Church encourages families to have a weekly “Family Bible Study” time together.
	Church regularly starts new Sunday School classes or small groups.
	Opportunities are provided throughout the year for doctrinal and special emphasis Bible studies.

_____ **Total Sunday School/Discipleship Checkup Count**

Evangelism Checkup

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low; 5 being high), how would you rate your church in leading people to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Please use whole numbers (e.g. 1, 2, 3 NOT 1.5, 2.5, 3.5)

	There is evidence that a majority of members share their faith with others and invite them to church.
	Church emphasizes prayer for spiritually lost people to come to know Jesus as personal Savior and Lord.
	Church has a system for greeting first time guest, receiving information from them, and helping them to feel welcome.
	Church is organized and is training individuals in how to share their faith with others.
	Church has a plan to identify guests and have members make a follow up contact with them.
	Members are often encouraged to identify people in their social network and to build relationships and share Christ with them.
	Church plans and conducts regular outreach emphasis (e.g., special evangelistic events, servant evangelism projects, block parties, VBS, musical programs, etc.)
	Church keeps and utilizes up to date prospect files.
	Baptism is celebrated at least quarterly.
	Church intentionally stays aware of the demographic make-up and needs within their community context and plans evangelistic strategies accordingly.

Total Evangelism Checkup Count

Leadership Checkup

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low; 5 being high), how would you rate your church leadership? Please use whole numbers (e.g. 1, 2, 3 NOT 1.5, 2.5, 3.5)

	Church has a written mission statement that is communicated well in a variety of ways.
	Church understands its purpose, how to accomplish the mission, and what the results will be.
	The pastor often communicated the overall purpose of the church and his vision for fulfilling it.
	Most church members know and could explain what is expected of them as a member.
	It is clear how, when and by whom decisions are made in the church.
	Leaders are effectively enlisted, equipped and empowered to oversee their area of responsibility.
	The church seeks to make sure its ministries have the resources necessary to fulfill its objectives.
	Church leaders demonstrate love to volunteers through public and private acts of appreciation.
	The key leaders of our church support, communicate, and actively fulfill the vision.
	There is a clear and intentional pathway to develop new leaders within the church.

_____ **Total Leadership Checkup Count**

Worship Checkup

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low; 5 being high), how would you rate your church in worship? Please use whole numbers (e.g. 1, 2, 3 NOT 1.5, 2.5, 3.5)

	Church acknowledges Jesus as Lord of all and responds by expressing love for him in workshop.
	Church encourages/resources members to experience God's power/presence by seeking Him personally through daily prayers and devotion.
	Teachers establish an environment in Bible study classes that lead people to encounter the life-changing God.
	Church has examined how well its worship style and time(s) fits its members/prospective members, and has made changes where necessary.
	Leaders are prepared and opportunity is given for the spiritually lost to respond to the gospel at every worship service.
	Church regularly involves volunteers in the worship service, both in planning, conducting and evaluating.
	Worship leaders plan ahead and use a variety of creative elements in worship services such as readings, different styles of music, drama, video, sermons, etc.
	Church receives the offering as an act of worship.
	The Word of God is proclaimed faithfully and persuasively.
	Church services are designed to lead individuals to actively participate in corporate expressions of worship.

Total Worship Checkup Count

Fellowship Checkup

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low; 5 being high), how would you rate your church in establishing and building relationships with God and His people? Please use whole numbers (e.g. 1, 2, 3 NOT 1.5, 2.5, 3.5)

	Church teaches on and encourages believers to unite with the church through baptism or statement of faith.
	Church has created an environment of belonging through grace, acceptance, support, and mutual encouragement.
	Church provides opportunities to build relationships through fellowship activities beyond Sunday.
	Church provides fellowship through Special Emphases such as Senior Adult Day, Student Day, etc., and/or holidays.
	Church provides opportunities to build fellowship through praying and serving together.
	Sunday School or small group maintains contact with members who are away from home and those in leadership in other age groups.
	There are regular sermons focusing on the significance of fellowship and living in community with other Christians.
	Church has developed strategies for extending fellowship to those who are not part of the church.
	Church is careful not to overburden staff members and volunteers so that they have time to build relationships.
	Church leaders have been trained to handle conflict constructively.

_____ **Total Fellowship Checkup Count**

Mission/Ministry Checkup

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low; 5 being high), how would you rate your church in ministry/missions? Please use whole numbers (e.g. 1, 2, 3 NOT 1.5, 2.5, 3.5)

	Church has a plan to identify and appropriately meet the benevolent needs within the congregation and community.
	Church provides opportunities for church members to discover their gifts, talents and strengths; and a clear pathway to find ministries where they can be deployed.
	Church is organized for effective ministry to member, prospects, and family members.
	Church equips people for ministry/missions through ongoing Bible study and special training events.
	Church involves individuals and groups in ministry/missions through ministry projects, special assignments, and mission opportunities.
	Church provides church wide ministry/missions projects for individuals and/or family participation.
	Church demonstrates a climate open to ministry/missions in the local community and area.
	Church demonstrates an openness to sponsor, aid, or participate in a new church start.
	Church surveys the needs of members and non-members to determine future ministry goals.
	Church body is regularly involved in mission education for all age groups.

_____ Total Mission/Ministry Checkup Count

Stewardship Checkup

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low; 5 being high), how would you rate your church in stewardship? Please use whole numbers (e.g. 1, 2, 3 NOT 1.5, 2.5, 3.5)

	Pastor and church leaders exemplify Biblical stewardship in personal giving and testimony.
	Pastor and church leader are open and honest regarding church business.
	Church has stewardship/giving emphasis at least one a year.
	Christian financial management classes are offered.
	Biblical giving and the stewardship of life are taught as the norm for believers.
	Website is attractive, functional, informative, up to date and free of errors.
	Exterior appearance is inviting; adequate parking is provided for handicap and guests; grounds are well lighted and well-kept and maintained.
	Interior appearance is clean and inviting, adequate and clean restrooms, children and preschool area is child friendly, safe and clean.
	Signage is visible from the street, entrances are properly marked, service times and office hours are posted, and interior signage give clear directions.
	Church has made their facility handicap accessible.

_____ **Total Stewardship Checkup Count**

APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE DATA COLLATION ARTIFACT

Appendix 1	Evangelism Checkup
Appendix 2	Sunday School/Discipleship Checkup
Appendix 3	Fellowship Checkup
Appendix 4	Ministry/Missions Checkup
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Appendix 6	Leadership Checkup
Appendix 7	Stewardship Checkup

ARTIFACTS

APPENDIX

EVANGELISM CHECKUP

Rating Scale of 1-5 (1 being Low and 5 being High)

Respondent	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
R33	5	5	1	5	4	3	5	5	5	
R34	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	
R35	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	1	
R36	2	2	2	5	2	5	2	1	1	
R37	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	
R38	2	4	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	
R39	5	4	5	3	4	4	3	4	5	
R40	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	

R41	5	5	5	3	5	4	3	5	5	
R42	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	
R43	4	3	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	
R44	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	
R45	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	
R46	5	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	5	
R47	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	
R48	5	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	
R49	5	5	5	3	3	3	5	5	5	
R50	5	3	5	2	5	3	3	3	4	
R51	5	4	1	3	5	2	3	5	5	
R52	4	5	5	5	5	1	4	2	3	
R53	3	5	5	2	5	5	2	2	4	
R54	4	5	5	1	4	5	5	5	5	
R55	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R56	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R57	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R58	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	
R59	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
F60	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R61	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R62	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R63	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R64	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R65	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	

R66	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R67	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R68	5	5	5	5	5	1	5	5	5	
Item Sum	150	147	152	136	151	136	143	148	153	1
Item Average Rate	4.6875	4.59375	4.75	4.25	4.71875	4.25	4.46875	4.625	4.78125	4.8
AGGREGATE RATE	4.596875									

APPENDIX __

SUNDAY SCHOOL/DISCIPLESHIP CHECKUP

Rating Scale of 1-5 (1 being Low and 5 being High)

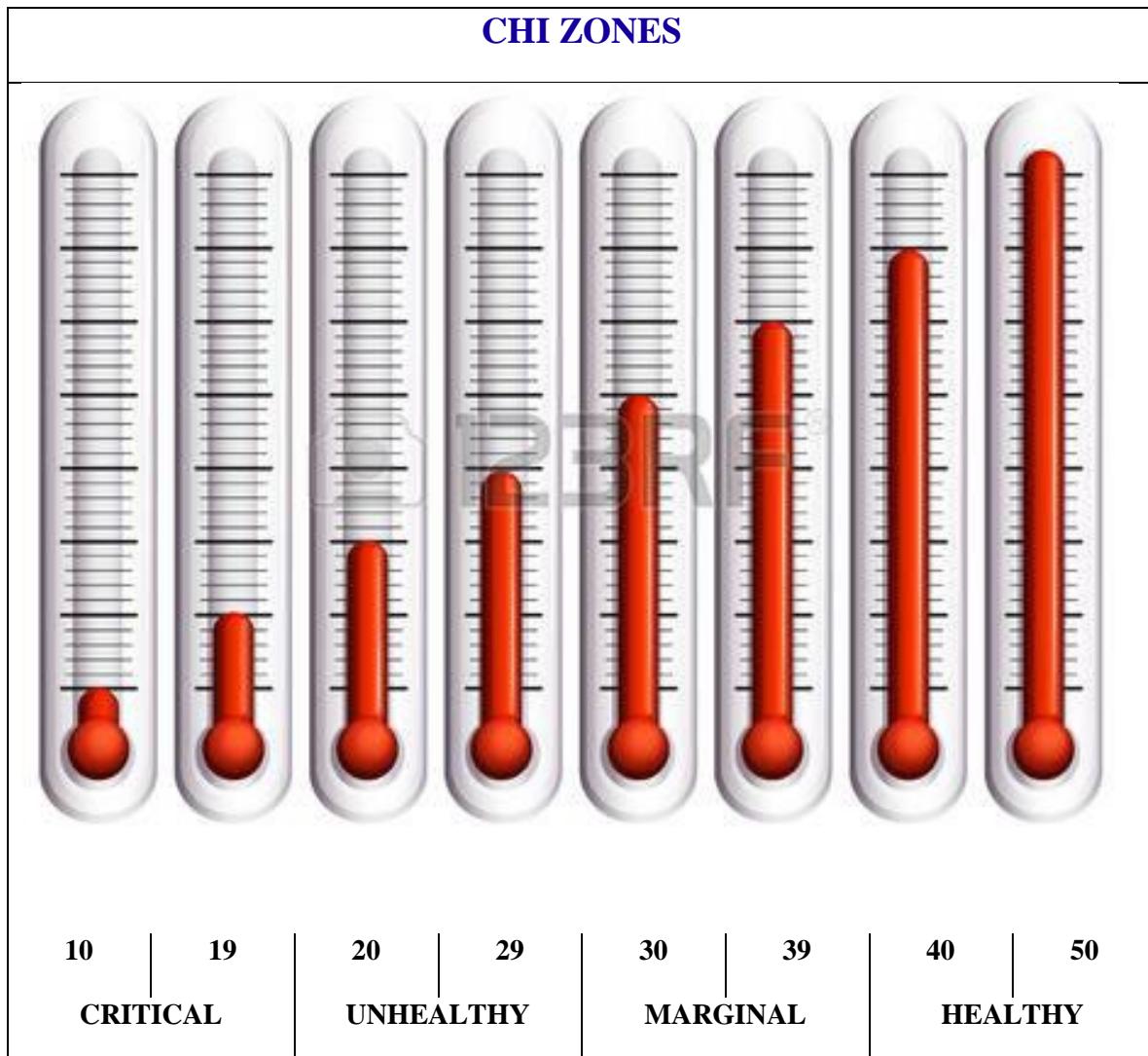
Respondent	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9
R1	5	3	1	5	3	4	1	3	4
R2	3	5	4	3	3	5	3	4	1
R3	3	5	4	3	3	5	3	4	1
R4	5	4	5	3	5	3	5	5	5
R5	5	5	5	3	5	3	3	5	5
R6	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	3
R7	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	2
R8	5	5	5	1	5	2	3	4	4
R9	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	4	4
R10	3	1	1	4	3	3	1	4	1
R11	4	5	5	3	4	2	5	2	3
R12	5	5	5	3	5	4	5	5	5
R13	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4
R14	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2
R15	5	5	5	4	5	2	4	4	3
R16	5	5	3	1	1	1	2	5	4
R17	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	3	4
R18	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
R19	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5
R20	5	5	5	3	5	4	5	4	5
R21	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

R22	3	5	5	1	5	5	5	5	5	
R23	4	5	4	2	3	2	3	3	3	
R24	4	4	3	3	4	4	5	3	3	
R25	5	4	5	3	4	3	4	5	3	
R26	5	4	4	3	3	2	3	3	4	
R27	5	5	5	4	4	3	4	5	4	
R28	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	2	
R29	4	3	2	4	3	4	4	3	3	
R30	5	5	5	1	3	1	4	5	1	
R31	4	5	4	3	3	4	5	5	3	
R32	5	5	5	3	5	1	5	5	3	
Item Sum	139	144	137	108	129	111	124	132	109	
Item Average Rate	4.34375	4.5	4.28125	3.375	4.03125	3.46875	3.875	4.125	3.40625	
AGGREGATE RATE										

APPENDIX_____

Church Health Inventory (CHI)
VITAL SIGN DATA TABLE & CHURCH INVENTORY ZONE (CHI)
Rating Scale of 1-5 (1 being Low and 5 being High)

Table 1.



APPENDIX__

Table 3.

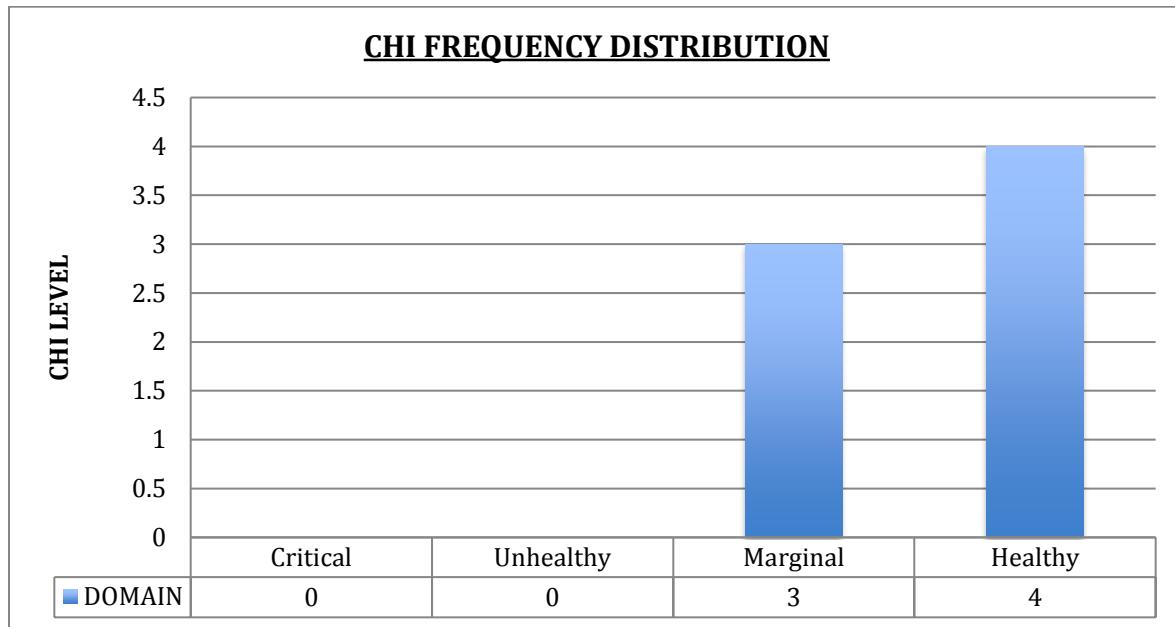


Table 3 shows the frequency level of each of the health categories. According to this chart NLCC's health is marginal to healthy. It is the desire of the researcher to use this data to drive the curriculum and planning of the church. The areas the church is indicating marginal health are the areas that need the most immediate attention.

APPENDIX __

Table 4.

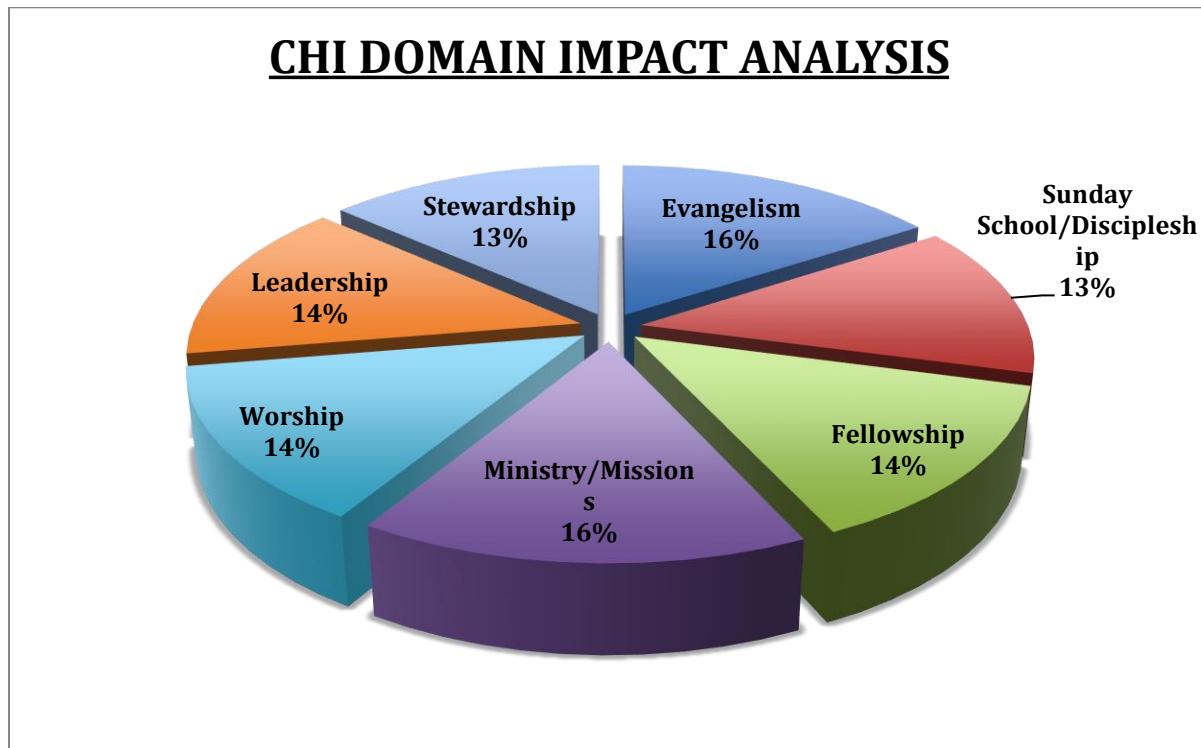


Table 4 is a Pie Chart that illustrates the impact of the ministry as it relates to the whole of the areas of ministry accessed.

Table 5.

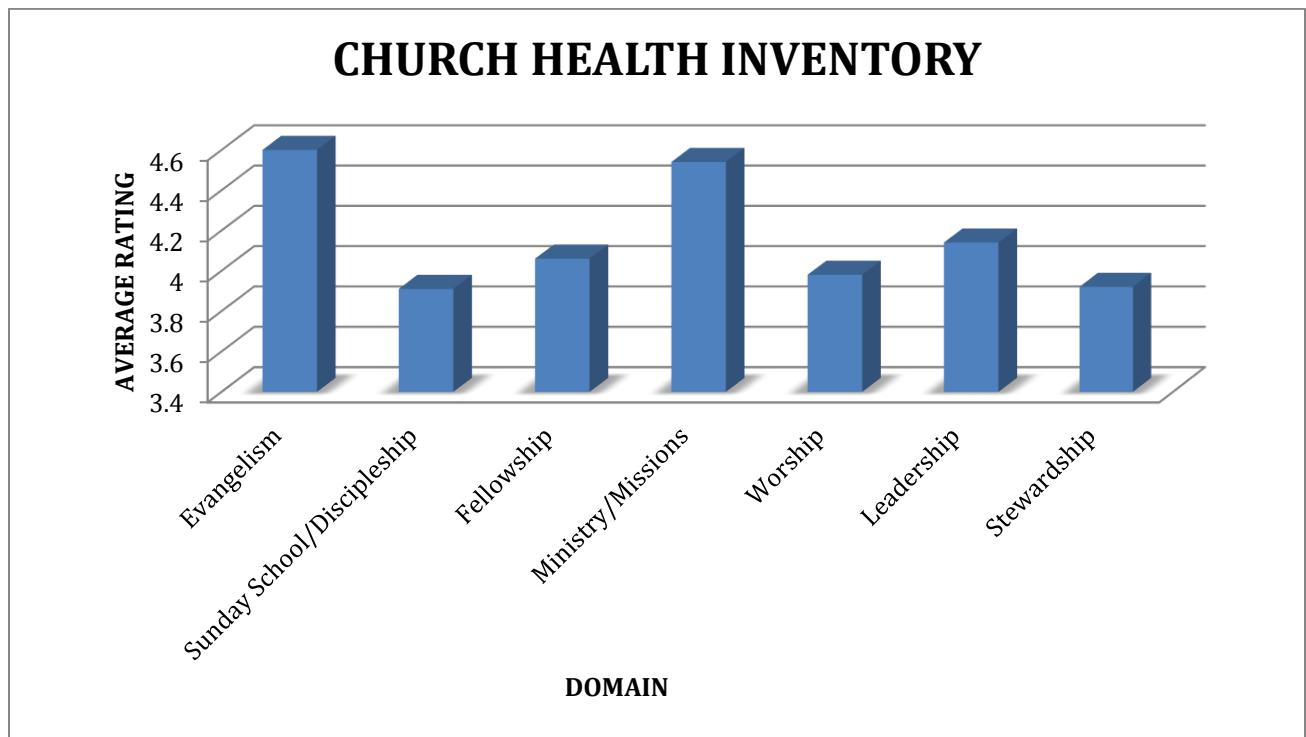
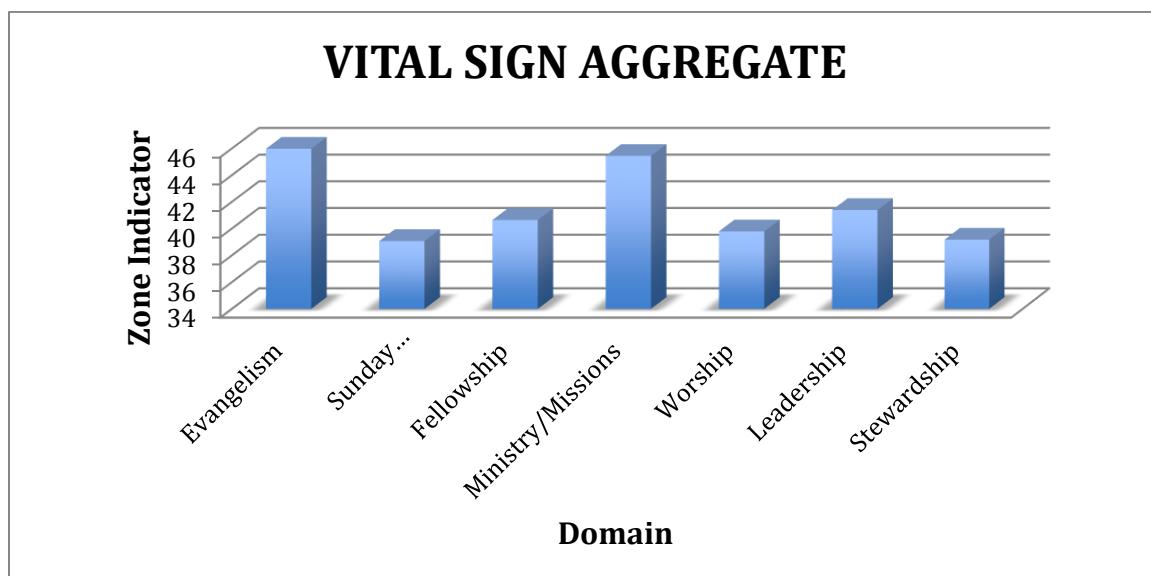
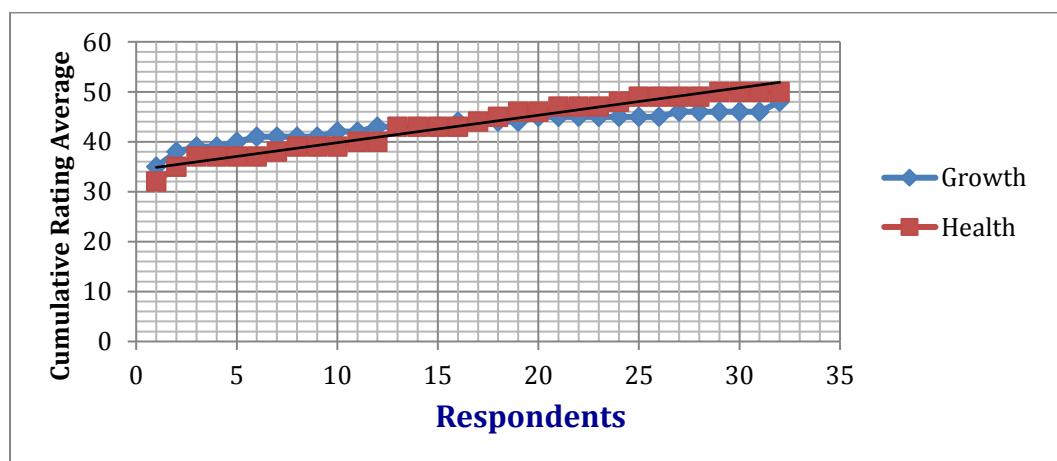


Table 6.



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HEALTH-GROWTH CORRELATION TABLE
THIS TABLE BELONGS TO APPENDIX/ARTIFACTS

Church Growth Factors			Church Health Factor			Growth Average	Health Average
Evangelism	Sunday School	Worship	Leadership	Mission	Stewardship		
43	31	44	46	44	45	39	45
47	33	50	50	50	50	43	50
40	33	50	50	50	50	41	50
23	42	50	50	50	50	38	50
46	44	48	50	48	50	46	49
44	46	50	50	50	47	46	49
40	35	50	50	50	45	41	48
47	35	50	22	50	26	44	32
45	41	50	30	50	33	45	37
49	25	50	44	50	49	41	47
44	37	50	50	50	46	43	49
43	47	50	39	50	16	46	35
48	46	50	35	50	33	48	39
43	34	50	44	50	45	42	46
43	41	46	45	46	25	43	39
45	31	46	47	46	44	40	46
44	42	50	44	50	19	45	38
38	50	50	44	50	16	46	37
38	48	50	41	50	29	45	40
38	46	50	44	50	22	45	39

38	49	50	35	50	48	45	44
44	44	50	45	50	47	46	47
50	34	22	50	22	48	35	40
50	36	30	50	30	50	39	43
50	39	44	50	44	48	44	47
48	34	50	50	50	50	44	50
50	43	39	47	39	44	44	43
50	38	35	45	35	30	41	37
50	33	44	26	44	41	42	37
50	33	45	33	45	50	43	43
50	39	47	49	47	50	45	49
50	41	44	46	44	39	45	43
Average						43.125	43.375

APPENDIX

NLCC Ministry Action Plan (MAP)

Issue	Ministry Action Plan (MAP)	Implementation	Person Responsible	Plan Begin/End Dates
Sunday-School				

Stewardship		.		
Worship		.		

XXXX XXXXXX PUBLIC SCHOOL CAP

Issue	Corrective Action	Implementation	Person Responsible	Plan Begin/End Dates
Travel Expenses and Reimbursements	The board must ensure expense limits, separate travel account lines must be established	The Business Office must create travel account codes to accommodate Board Policy	Accounts Payable Dept. Admin. Confidential	

			Secretary Accountants Controller	
Liquidate obligations incurred during the grant period of 90 days	The grant period ended and funds were not liquidated in accordance with the grant	The controller and the account assigned to the grant has to ensure that the grant is executed and payment is made to the vendor within 90 days	Accountant Controller	

The chart above illustrates the process that the district follows in order to improve accounting practices

APPENDIX

NLCC Ministry SMART Goal Planning Form	
Specific – WHO? WHAT? WHERE? HOW MUCH? HOW MANY?	
Measurement/Assessment – HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF IT IS A SUCCESS?	

Attainable/Achievable – REASONABLE?
Relevant – EXPECTED RESULT?
Timed – WHEN?

**New Life Christian Church
2017-2018
Church Improvement Plan (CIP) Template**

Christian Church (DOC)	Church Name	Pastor's Name	Plan Begin/End Dates
Bloomfield	New Life Christian Church (DOC)	Stephen Webb	September 2017/ September 2018

1: Professional Learning Goals

No.	Goal	Identified Group	Rationale/Sources of Evidence
1	Conduct a needs assessment to gage the health and growth of the church	All Church Staff	

2	Increase knowledge and practice church administration	All staff	To increase student outcomes and prove student behavior and development. Evidence: Documents
3	Increase practice of preaching and teaching	All staff	To encourage and monitor student attendance and improve student behavior and outcomes. Evidence:

2: Professional Learning Activities

PL Goal No.	Initial Activities	Follow-up (as applicable)
1	Bible Studies, conferences and webinars	Pre and Post evaluation
2	Workshops in and out of district. CPI for all, collaboration time, periodicals and publications.	Faculty and staff collaboration, referrals, IPP reviews, reports.
3	CPR Training AED machine, suicide training, affirmative action training	IPP reviews, counseling

3: Essential Resources

PL Goal No.	Resources	Other Implementation Considerations
1	TeachScape, Danielson Framework for Teaching, PowerPoint. Attendance	Adequate funding, availability of courses, time constraints.
2	PowerPoint presentation, more research based data.	Adequate funding, time, location. Who will do it?
3	Workshop, research based and other model.	Adequate funding, time, location. Who will do it?

4: Progress Summary

PL Goal No.	Notes on Plan Implementation	Notes on Progress
1		
2		
3		

Signature: _____

Building Administrator

Date

- *Vision: We are called to serve the Lord and the community in a number of diverse, but deeply connected ways: through prayer and worship, teaching, proclamation, service and outreach.*
- *Mission: New Life Christian Church is a community of faith reaching the hearts, soul, and mind of all people. We provide an atmosphere of worship that is life changing: a ministry that is compassionate, SUPPORTIVE and Empowering of all people, through education and teaching of biblical truths. We are called to serve God and the community in a number of diverse, but deeply connect ways as we follow Christ.*

Bibliography

